

From "Etiquette Constraint" to "Value Identification": An Exploration of the Internal Drive Transformation Mechanism of Integrating Ideological and Political Elements into Business Etiquette Courses

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ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop of the deepening reform of "Curriculum Ideology and Politics" in higher education, transforming value guidance from external discipline into students' internal identification is a key challenge to enhance the effectiveness of education. Business Etiquette courses, by virtue of their combination of external behavioral norms and internal value-bearing capacity, provide a unique field for exploring this transformation mechanism. Using Self-Determination Theory as the analytical framework, this paper aims to investigate how the integration of ideological and political elements into Business Etiquette courses can achieve a systematic transformation from relying on the external drive effects of "etiquette constraint" to stimulating the internal drive effects of "value identification." The article first clarifies the dialectical relationship between "external drive" and "internal drive" in ideological and political education, then analyzes the prevalent "external drive dependence" dilemma in current practices of integrating ideology and politics into Business Etiquette courses. The core section constructs an internal drive transformation mechanism model based on three pillars: "fostering autonomy," "cultivating competence," and "strengthening relatedness." Combined with specific teaching cases, it proposes practical pathways of "contextual empowerment - graded practice - community construction." Research indicates that through carefully designed pedagogical transformation, the concrete rules of business etiquette can effectively serve as cognitive "scaffolding" and emotional "triggers" for Socialist Core Values, thereby opening the psychological channel from behavioral compliance to value internalization, offering theoretical reference and practical inspiration for the ideological and political construction of similar courses.

KEYWORDS

Curriculum Ideology and Politics; Business Etiquette; Internal Drive; Value Identification; Self-Determination Theory; Transformation Mechanism

1. INTRODUCTION

The fundamental task of ideological and political work in higher education is to foster virtue and cultivate talents. Its effectiveness is reflected not only in students' mastery of normative knowledge but, more importantly, in their heartfelt identification with and conscious practice of core values. However, traditional ideological and political education has, to some extent, exhibited a tendency to "emphasize external drive over internal drive," i.e., over-reliance on external constraints such as

course credits, disciplinary assessments, and grade evaluations (external drive), while insufficiently exploring how to stimulate students' intrinsic motivation (internal drive) based on interest, identification, and the search for meaning. This can easily lead to utilitarian learning behaviors, superficial value cognition, and a disconnect between knowledge and practice [1].

The proposal of the "course-based ideological and political education" concept requires all courses to fulfill their educational functions and align with ideological and political theory courses. This offers a new approach to addressing the aforementioned challenges: by organically integrating ideological and political elements into various specialized courses, students can subtly receive value-oriented cultivation while acquiring knowledge and developing skills. In this context, the Business Etiquette course demonstrates particular advantages for integration. Etiquette is essentially the external behavioral expression of social values, and business etiquette specifically carries modern professional ethics and Socialist Core Values such as integrity, respect, equality, and professionalism. Its teaching naturally involves both "rule learning" (external drive) and "literacy cultivation" (internal drive), providing an almost ideal microcosm for observing and researching the transformation from "external drive to internal drive [2]."

Therefore, this paper focuses on the Business Etiquette course, with the core research question being: When integrating ideological and political elements into this course, how can we go beyond simple "rule appending" or "disciplinary constraint" to construct an effective pedagogical transformation mechanism, thereby transforming external "etiquette constraint" into students' internal "value identification" and achieving sustained stimulation of internal drive? The analysis of this mechanism is not only directly significant for improving the educational quality of the Business Etiquette course itself but also holds important theoretical reference value for the broader ideological and political construction of specialized courses, particularly regarding how to achieve value internalization [3].

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DRIVES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY

To clarify the transformation mechanism, it is first necessary to theoretically define the relationship between "internal drive" and "external drive." This paper primarily draws on Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as the core analytical framework. This theory posits that humans have three basic psychological needs: Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness. When these needs are supported by the environment, individuals are more likely to internalize external rules, forming highly autonomous and integrated intrinsic motivation [4].

Applying this framework to the context of ideological and political education can clearly define the nature and relationship of the two drives:

External Drive: Corresponds to external regulation and introjected regulation. Its motivation stems from external rewards/punishments, social pressure, or self-worth (e.g., avoiding shame). In the course, it manifests as explicit attendance requirements, behavioral norms, exam scores, etc.—the "etiquette constraint." This is the necessary starting point and baseline for ensuring teaching order and guiding students to encounter values.

Internal Drive: Corresponds to identified regulation and integrated regulation, ultimately approaching intrinsic motivation. Its motivation stems from the individual's identification with the value of the behavior itself and its integration into their self-concept. In the course, it manifests as students' genuine identification with the values behind etiquette, such as "respect" and "integrity," and their willingness to practice them even without supervision. This is the ultimate goal of ideological and political education.

The relationship between the two is not oppositional but exists as a continuum of internalization. Effective education does not eliminate external drives but aims to promote the inward transformation

of motivation along the path of "external regulation → introjected regulation → identified regulation → integrated regulation" by supporting students' basic psychological needs. The core task of integrating ideology and politics into the Business Etiquette course is precisely to design teaching segments that provide sustained supportive conditions for this transformation.

3. CURRENT SITUATION EXAMINATION: THE "EXTERNAL DRIVE DEPENDENCE" DILEMMA IN BUSINESS ETIQUETTE CURRICULUM IDEOLOGY AND POLITICS

Although Business Etiquette is regarded as a high-quality carrier for Curriculum Ideology and Politics, in current teaching practice, the integration of ideological and political elements still faces challenges of superficiality and mechanization, showing significant characteristics of "external drive dependence," which hinders the generation of internal drive [5]. Specific manifestations include:

"Labeling" Integration, Lack of Autonomy: Some teaching inserts ideological and political content as isolated modules or rigid "labels" after etiquette knowledge points, such as simply emphasizing "embodies a rigorous style" after teaching "dress etiquette," failing to deeply and organically integrate value elements with etiquette norms. This "preachy" addition places students in a passive acceptance position, depriving them of the space for autonomous exploration and meaning construction, easily triggering psychological resistance, and failing to meet the "need for autonomy."

"Knowledge-based" Tendency, Competence Gap: Teaching overemphasizes the memorization of etiquette rules and mechanical imitation of scenarios, with insufficient depth in addressing the complex value judgments and ethical dilemmas behind the rules (e.g., the boundaries of integrity in cultural differences, the principle of respect in conflicts of interest). This leads to students "knowing" the rules but being unable to "act" accordingly in real, complex business situations, creating a sense of frustration from "knowing is easy, doing is hard," undermining their "sense of competence" in using values to solve practical problems.

"Individualized" Assessment, Weak Relatedness: Evaluation methods are mostly limited to individual assignments and written exams, lacking assessment designs based on teamwork, real projects, or social service. This makes learning an isolated individual task, making it difficult to create a "learning community" where values are discussed, emotions resonate, and behaviors are mutually encouraged. Students lack the experience of "relatedness" in deepening value understanding through collective interaction, making it hard for value identification to take root at the emotional level.

These dilemmas indicate that without systematically constructing an internal drive transformation mechanism, the ideological and political function of the Business Etiquette course may remain at the external drive level of "using discipline to constrain behavior," failing to achieve the internal drive goal of "shaping the soul with values."

4. MECHANISM CONSTRUCTION: THE THREE PILLARS OF INTERNAL DRIVE TRANSFORMATION

Based on Self-Determination Theory and combined with the characteristics of the Business Etiquette course, this paper proposes an internal drive transformation mechanism model centered on supporting students' three basic psychological needs. This model aims to transform every point of "etiquette constraint" in the course into an opportunity to stimulate "value identification."

4.1. Pillar One: Autonomy Generation Mechanism—From "Passive Compliance" to "Active Construction"

This mechanism aims to meet students' need for autonomy, guiding them from passive recipients of rules to active explorers and meaning-makers of values.

Pathway Design: The Open Transformation of Curriculum Value Topics: Transforming fixed etiquette norms into explorable value topics. For example, instead of directly stipulating that "punctuality is necessary in negotiations," setting topics such as "punctuality" is only for efficiency, or is it a manifestation of the core value of "respect" for others? How to grasp the scale of "respect" in cross-border negotiations where different cultures have different understandings of "punctuality"?

Multiple Choices in Learning Paths: Within the teaching objective framework, allow students to autonomously choose the depth of exploration of certain etiquette topics and the form of presenting learning outcomes (e.g., case analysis reports, role-plays, micro-videos, designs for public welfare etiquette lectures).

Embedding Reflective Practice: After each simulation practice or case analysis, mandatorily include individual or group reflection sessions, guiding students to think: "Why did I act this way? What value I identify with does this connect to?"

Function: By granting choice and inquiry space, students feel their behavior stems from self-determination, thereby connecting external etiquette requirements (e.g., "must respect others") with internal value judgments (e.g., "I choose to respect because I believe it's the foundation of positive relationships"), initiating the internalization process.

4.2. Pillar Two: Competence Cultivation Mechanism—From "Knowing is Easier than Doing" to "Unity of Knowledge and Action"

This mechanism aims to meet students' need for competence, by building "scaffolding" to help students translate abstract values into operable, achievable behavioral abilities, accumulating positive experiences.

Pathway Design: Graded Decomposition of Value Abilities: Decompose macro value goals into ladder, observable behavioral ability objectives. For example, cultivating "integrity" literacy can be decomposed into: Level 1, accurately identifying words and deeds lacking integrity in simulated scenarios; Level 2, designing communication strategies that both protect interests and adhere to integrity in complex cases containing temptations of interest; Level 3, practicing integrity commitments under pressure in real or highly simulated project practices.

Providing Cognitive and Action "Scaffolding": Provide students with toolkits for practicing values, such as a "Cross-Cultural Communication Ethics Checklist," a "Value Conflict Decision Tree in Business Negotiations," etc. These tools concretize abstract concepts like "integrity" and "equality" into behavioral guidelines in specific contexts.

Process Feedback and Success Recording: Establish a process-oriented evaluation system where teachers provide timely, specific feedback on students' value judgment and ethical decision-making demonstrated in practice. Simultaneously, use methods like portfolio assessment to record each successful value practice, reinforcing their "I can do it" self-efficacy.

Function: As students complete challenges of increasing difficulty, they continuously experience the success of using values to solve practical problems, thus becoming confident in their ability to practice these values. The internal drive is consolidated through the satisfaction of "competence."

4.3. Pillar Three: Relatedness Strengthening Mechanism—From "Atomized Learning" to "Community Immersion"

This mechanism aims to meet students' need for relatedness, creating an emotionally safe, value-symbiotic "community" field inside and outside the classroom, allowing value identification to deepen through interpersonal interaction and emotional resonance.

Pathway Design: Building a Cooperative Inquiry Learning Community: Extensively adopt cooperative learning forms such as group projects, role-playing, and collaborative case studies. Task design must rely on deep interaction and value negotiation among members to complete, for example, jointly developing a business conduct guide for a company planning to enter a "Belt and Road" country, integrating the essence of Chinese etiquette with local culture.

Emotional Connection in Teacher-Student Relationships: The teacher's role shifts from knowledge authority to collaborator and facilitator of value dialogue. By listening sincerely, respecting different viewpoints, and sharing personal professional ethics stories, teachers build trust-based emotional connections with students. Neuroscience research suggests that teachers' emotional investment can enhance students' identification with the teacher and the values they convey.

Expanding Authentic Social Connections: Extend the learning field from the classroom to society, such as organizing students to conduct public welfare etiquette training for enterprises or communities, or interviewing entrepreneurs about their practice of business ethics. Allow students to feel the social significance of values in service and dialogue, establishing value connections with the broader world.

Function: Within the community, students' discussion, practice, and reflection on values are no longer solitary but are witnessed by peers, supported by teachers, and echoed by society. This profound "relatedness" advances value identification from the cognitive level to the level of emotional belonging, making it more stable and enduring.

The three pillar mechanisms are interconnected and synergistic: Autonomy is the starting point of internalization, granting possibility to the transformation; Competence is the support of internalization, granting feasibility to the transformation; Relatedness is the catalyst of internalization, granting emotional depth and persistence to the transformation.

5. PRACTICAL PATHWAY: TAKING THE "INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS NEGOTIATION ETIQUETTE" MODULE AS AN EXAMPLE

Using the common "International Business Negotiation Etiquette" module as an example, the following elaborates how the above three mechanisms can be integrated into teaching design to achieve the transformation from "etiquette constraint" to "value identification."

5.1. Context Creation and Autonomy Empowerment (Autonomy)

Instead of directly listing negotiation etiquette rules, present a real, complex case background of a cross-border M&A negotiation. Student groups are assigned different roles (e.g., Chinese acquisition team, foreign family-owned target company). The task is not to "perform correct etiquette" but to "achieve business goals while maximizing the expression of respect for the other party's culture, history, and employee emotions through etiquette behaviors, and to write an ethical negotiation strategy report." Students need to autonomously decide how to research the other party's culture and in which links (e.g., meeting arrangements, gift selection, negotiation pace) to inject elements like "respect" and "integrity."

5.2. Graded Training and Scaffolding Support (Competence)

Level 1 (Cognition): Provide tools like "Cultural Dimensions Theory" to analyze potential cultural conflict points (e.g., views on time, communication styles) in the case, identifying potential breaches of etiquette and value offenses.

Level 2 (Design): Use scaffolding like a "Value-First Negotiation Framework" to require groups to design specific negotiation agendas and communication scripts, ensuring that even under pressure during price battles or term bargaining, sincerity and fairness can be conveyed through etiquette details (e.g., listening posture, concession methods).

Level 3 (Simulation and Feedback): Conduct high-fidelity simulation negotiations. Teachers and observer groups focus on assessing "value behaviors" rather than merely "etiquette forms." Conduct structured post-mortem analysis, with feedback focusing on, for example: "When and how did you successfully or unsuccessfully express respect? What impact did this have on the negotiation atmosphere?"

5.3. Community Construction and Meaning Extension (Relatedness)

After the simulation, organize a "Negotiation Ethics Salon," inviting different groups to share strategies and debate topics like "Where is the boundary between etiquette and integrity in the face of huge interests?" The teacher participates in the discussion as an equal member, sharing business examples.

Compile outstanding ethical negotiation strategy reports into a booklet, serving as a draft "Guide to Etiquette and Ethics for Overseas Business Operations," and attempt to share it with the university's overseas partner enterprises or alumni enterprises, establishing a real connection between learning outcomes and social practice.

Through this series of designs, the external rule learning about "negotiation etiquette" is transformed into a complete journey of value internalization: understanding "respect" through autonomous inquiry, practicing "integrity" through graded challenges, and identifying with "equality" through community dialogue.

6. CONCLUSION

The advanced form of integrating Business Etiquette courses with ideological and political education is by no means simply draping a value cloak over behavioral norms, but rather dedicated to constructing a refined, student psychological need-centered internal drive transformation mechanism. The "Autonomy-Competence-Relatedness" three-pillar model, elucidated based on Self-Determination Theory in this paper, demonstrates that the key to successful transformation lies in: designing each specific "etiquette constraint" point into a teaching situation capable of stimulating students' autonomous inquiry, ability challenge, and emotional resonance.

This mechanism enlightens us that the ideological and political construction of specialized courses should advance from the primary stage of "element mining" to the advanced stage of "mechanism construction." The teacher's core task shifts from "instilling values" to "designing transformation," i.e., creating supportive environments to guide and accompany students through the process of value construction from external acceptance to internal integration. For the Business Etiquette course, this means its teaching objective should be elevated from cultivating "businesspeople who know the rules" to nurturing "practitioners of commercial civilization with a soul."

The mechanism model proposed in this study stems from theoretical deduction and case synthesis; its universality and effectiveness need to be tested through broader empirical research and action research in Business Etiquette courses across different institutions and professional backgrounds.

Future research could further focus on: the differential impact of various transformation mechanism pillars on students with different learning styles; long-term tracking of the effects of internal drive transformation; and the innovative application of digital technologies (e.g., virtual simulation, AI scenario generation) in creating high-fidelity value practice scenarios to support the operation of the transformation mechanism. Only by continuously deepening the scientific exploration and pedagogical innovation regarding the "internalization mechanism" can Curriculum Ideology and Politics truly touch the soul and contribute solid strength to cultivating newcomers of the era capable of shouldering the task of national rejuvenation, possessing both exquisite skills and noble character.

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