

Integrating Professional Skills with Ideological and Political Education-Design of a Photography and Videography Teaching Model Based on the Zone of Proximal Development Theory

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Abstract: This paper explores an ideological and political teaching model for vocational college photography and videography technology courses based on the theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). With the development of digital media technology, the importance of photography and videography in vocational education has increasingly become prominent. It not only requires students to master professional skills but also fosters their aesthetic appreciation and creative expression abilities. This study integrates ideological and political education into photography and videography courses to enhance students' professional skills and their understanding of socialist core values. Through empirical research, we found that this teaching model effectively enhances students' professional skills and ideological qualities. However, issues such as differences in student participation, limitations of the feedback mechanism, and the inadequacy of the evaluation system persist. In the future, we aim to further optimize the teaching model, refine student grouping, develop more effective feedback mechanisms, and establish a more scientific and reasonable evaluation system. These improvements aim to cultivate more highly skilled technical professionals with strong ideological and political literacy.

Keywords: Zone of Proximal Development, Photography and Videography, Classroom Ideology, Teaching Model, Student Participation.

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of digital media technology, photography and videography play an increasingly important role in recording history, spreading culture, and expressing art. Especially in vocational education, foundational courses in photography and videography not only require students to master professional skills but also emphasize cultivating their aesthetic appreciation and creative expression capabilities. In recent years, more researchers have extended the "Zone of Proximal Development" theory from child psychology and applied it to teaching in primary, secondary, and even higher education, offering new perspectives for designing photography and videography foundational courses. This theory emphasizes designing teaching content and activities based on students' current levels and potential development levels to promote effective learning.

In vocational education, ideological and political education also occupies an important position. Integrating ideological elements into professional teaching through photography and videography foundational courses can not only enhance students' professional skills but also cultivate their socialist core values, strengthening their cultural confidence and sense of social responsibility. However, effectively combining the ZPD theory with ideological and political education in photography and videography courses remains a subject worthy of further exploration.

This study aims to explore a teaching model for photography and videography foundational courses based on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory, with the goal of improving students' professional skills while strengthening ideological and political education. Specific

objectives include:

Constructing an ideological and political teaching model for vocational photography and videography foundational courses based on the ZPD theory.

Analyzing the practical application of this teaching model, including the improvement of students' professional skills and ideological qualities.

Investigating the roles and challenges faced by teachers during the implementation of this teaching model.

Through in-depth research, we hope to provide effective guidance for designing photography and videography foundational courses, thereby cultivating more high-quality technical talents equipped with professional skills and ideological literacy.

2. Research Background and Domestic Research Achievements

2.1. Zone of Proximal Development Theory

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is an important concept proposed by Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky. The theory posits that children's development has two levels: the actual development level and the potential development level. The actual development level refers to the tasks children can complete independently without external assistance, while the potential development level refers to the tasks they can accomplish with the guidance of adults or more capable peers. The ZPD represents the gap between these two levels and reflects the child's developmental potential and possibilities.

Vygotsky emphasized that education should be based on the child's ZPD, providing appropriate challenges and support to promote their transition from actual development to

potential development levels. This theory offers significant insights for educational practice, especially in differentiated teaching and personalized learning.

2.2. The Connotation and Goals of Ideological and Political Education

Ideological and political education is an essential component of socialist education with Chinese characteristics. Its core goal is to cultivate students' social responsibility, innovative spirit, and practical ability, guiding them to develop a correct worldview, outlook on life, and values. In vocational education, ideological and political education not only focuses on students' political literacy but also emphasizes the cultivation of professional ethics and humanistic qualities.

2.3. Characteristics of Photography and Videography Foundational Courses

The foundational photography and videography course is an important professional course in vocational colleges. It not only involves the cultivation of technical skills but also contains rich humanistic and social content. Through this course, students can not only master basic photography and videography skills but also cultivate aesthetic taste and cultural literacy through the creation and appreciation of works.

2.4. Application of ZPD Theory in Higher Education Teaching

In 2013, Wang Zhiwen pointed out in the article "Exploration of Teaching Models for Public Art Appreciation Courses in Colleges Based on the Insights of ZPD Theory" that the course status was not optimistic, with low student enthusiasm and unsatisfactory teaching results. The article suggested adopting a student-centered approach, combining course characteristics, and setting up guided learning, interactive self-study, dynamic guidance, experiential learning, and individual presentation to stimulate student interest and improve teaching outcomes.

In 2020, Luo Xishu from Guiyang Preschool Teachers College proposed in the article "Insights of ZPD Theory on

Ideological and Political Education in Vocational Colleges" that based on the ZPD theory, college ideological and political courses should utilize questionnaires, group discussions, and speeches to understand students' current levels. On this basis, targeted teaching content can be designed, employing "scaffolding teaching" and "layered design" for individualized instruction.

In recent years, Ding Jie and Tong Yuansong, in their work *"Research on Innovative Approaches to Differentiated Teaching in Vocational Colleges from the Perspective of the Zone of Proximal Development"*, proposed implementing dynamic differentiated management and precise teaching to support growth.

3. Ideological and Political Education in Photography and Videography Courses Based on ZPD Theory

From September to December 2024, Zhao Jiongguang from the Intelligent Engineering College at Shanghai Aurora Vocational College conducted a series of teaching experiments on classroom ideological and political education using the ZPD theory in the foundational photography and videography course of the digital media technology program.

3.1. Setting Teaching Objectives

First, teaching objectives should be established based on students' zones of proximal development. This requires teachers to accurately assess students' current development levels and potential development levels to determine the depth and breadth of teaching content accordingly. Teaching objectives should be specific, measurable, and aligned with students' individual needs and career development goals. Given that images and videos are very common in daily life and students have more or less taken photos or videos using their phones, the teacher collected five photography works from each student before the start of the photography and videography course. Of these, two were taken by the students themselves, and three were selected from the internet.

After analysis and evaluation, the photography skills of the 60 students were categorized, and their preferences for types of photography works were classified as follows:

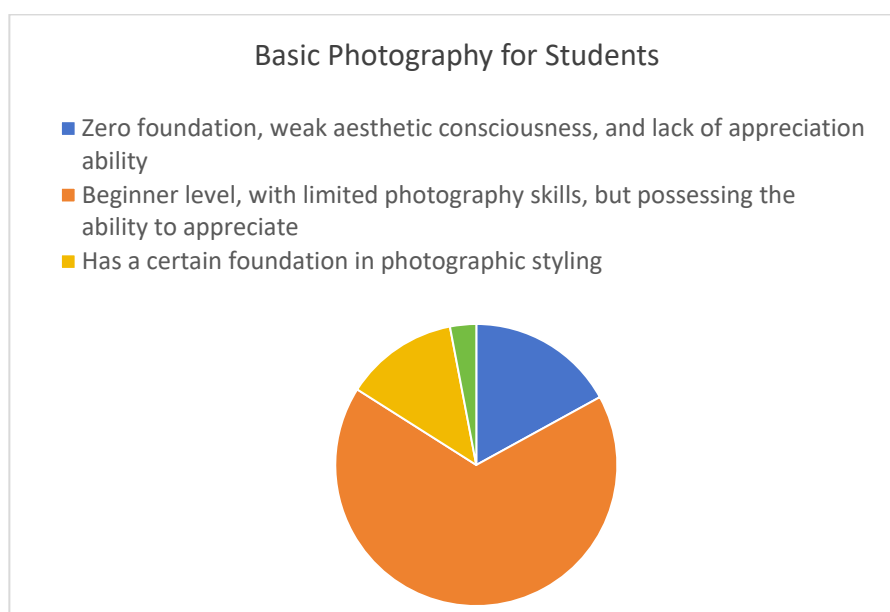


Figure 1 Students' Photography Skill Levels

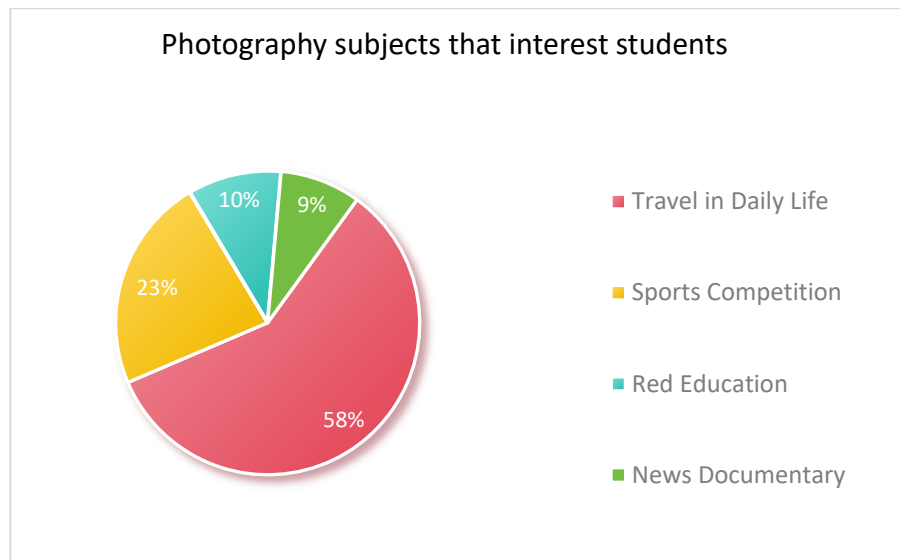


Figure 2 Students' Preferred Photography Subjects

The survey revealed that most students lacked technical knowledge of photography but had a basic sense of aesthetics. Students preferred photography subjects such as daily life, travel, and sports competitions rather than directly focusing

on "red education" imagery. To address this, the course introduced appreciation and shooting techniques for various types of photography works, integrating classroom ideological and political themes into the teaching.

Table 1 Students' Photography Skill Levels

Image Type	Classroom Ideological and Political Theme	Teaching Activities and Objectives
Learning and Life	Perseverance and Struggle	Analyze the study methods and attitudes of students in the images, discuss how to overcome difficulties, and cultivate a spirit of perseverance.
Sports	Teamwork and Fair Competition	Emphasize the importance of teamwork and the spirit of fair competition through sports competition scenes in the images.
Travel Records	Cultural Confidence and Patriotic Sentiments	Showcase the cultural characteristics of different regions, guide students to understand and respect multiculturalism, and enhance cultural confidence.

Based on the ZPD theory, we also designed different

objectives for students with varying levels of skill.

Table 2 Students' Preferred Photography Subjects

Student Photography Basics	Methods	Objectives
Beginners with weak aesthetic awareness and lack of appreciation ability	Enhance theoretical knowledge learning and increase appreciation of photographic works	Improve appreciation ability
Beginners with limited shooting ability but with appreciation ability	Strengthen basic photography skills training	Enhance basic photography skills
Have a certain foundation in photographic styling	Strengthen systematic learning of photography techniques	Comprehensively enhance photography skills
Solid foundation in photography through self-study before learning	Strengthen creative guidance	Be able to independently conduct photographic creation

3.2. Integration of Teaching Content

The integration of teaching content requires combining professional knowledge of photography and videography foundations with elements of ideological and political

education. This can be achieved by selecting photography and videography projects with social significance and cultural value, enabling students to understand and reflect on related social, cultural, and ethical issues while completing technical tasks.

Table 3 Knowledge Points and Course Ideology and Politics

Knowledge Point	Classroom Ideological and Political Point
Basic Knowledge of Photography and Video Techniques	Cultivate students' love for photography and videography techniques and professional ethics
Advanced Techniques of Photography and Video Techniques	Strengthen students' understanding of the importance of continuous improvement and innovation in technology
Practical Operation of Photography and Video Techniques	Cultivate students' teamwork and sense of responsibility through practical operations
Analysis and Evaluation of Photography and Video Works	Guide students to understand and respect multiculturalism, and enhance aesthetic literacy
The Role of Photography and Video Techniques in Social Development	Discuss the role of photography and videography techniques in social development, and enhance social responsibility

3.3. Innovation in Teaching Methods

The innovation of teaching methods focuses on encouraging students' active participation and experiential learning. In practice, this course incorporates diverse teaching methods such as project-based learning, scenario simulation, role-playing, and reflective discussions. It also creatively combines photography techniques with ideological education, presenting lessons in a "video game leveling-up" model. Students learn by completing main tasks, side tasks, invitation tasks, and expansion tasks. This innovative teaching approach greatly stimulates students' interest in learning and creativity.

For students with different foundational levels, teaching methods are also adjusted accordingly. For students with zero foundation, some aesthetic awareness, or photography composition skills, teachers design targeted teaching strategies and implement differentiated instruction. Students with weaker foundations are given simpler tasks, while those with stronger foundations face more challenging tasks to stimulate their potential.

In practice, these teaching methods have been widely adopted and achieved significant results. For example, in the "Photography Exhibition Preparation" module, students were divided into groups based on their skill levels. Students with aesthetic abilities were responsible for quality control and overall design of the works; those with weaker foundations focused on collecting and organizing outstanding photography works; and students with certain composition skills were tasked with actual shooting assignments. Such group collaboration not only improved teaching efficiency but also promoted communication and cooperation among students.

In summary, the innovative teaching methods, integration of video game elements, and implementation of differentiated instruction together form a comprehensive and effective learning system, ensuring that every student achieves optimal learning outcomes at a suitable pace and level of difficulty. Thus, teachers act as guides, effectively facilitating students' self-development within their Zone of Proximal Development.

3.4. Diversification of Teaching Evaluation

Teaching evaluation should not only focus on students' mastery of professional skills but also emphasize their progress in ideological literacy, especially through quantitative evaluation in photography creation and appreciation. This practice has been implemented through various forms of evaluation, including self-assessment, peer assessment, teacher evaluation, and project outcome presentations.

In terms of photography creation, we conduct comprehensive evaluations based on factors such as the theme,

creativity, technical application, and cultural content of students' works. Students are required to submit their photographic works and write creative reflections, using self-assessment to reflect on how ideological elements—such as values and social responsibility—are conveyed in their creations. Peer evaluation encourages students to appreciate each other's works and point out strengths and weaknesses in ideological expression. Teacher evaluations focus on providing professional feedback on works while combining ideological requirements to guide students in enhancing the intellectual depth and artistic value of their works. Project outcome presentations, such as photography exhibitions, allow students to showcase their creative achievements in practice, further developing their expression skills and sense of social responsibility.

In terms of photography appreciation, we assess students' aesthetic level, understanding of ideological and political elements, and critical thinking abilities by analyzing classic photographic works. Students are required to write appreciation reports, articulating their understanding of the works and analyzing the ideological and political elements reflected in them, such as representations of social phenomena and expressions of humanistic care. Peer evaluations encourage students to share their insights, inspire one another, and progress together. Teacher evaluations focus on providing feedback on the appreciation reports, guiding students to deeply understand the ideological and political connotations behind the works, and cultivating their independent thinking and critical analysis skills.

Additionally, the evaluation content encompasses multiple dimensions, including students' knowledge comprehension, skill application, innovative thinking, teamwork, and sense of social responsibility. Knowledge comprehension assesses not only students' mastery of photography techniques and theories but also their understanding of photography as an art and its ideological and political elements. Skill application is evaluated through practical operations and the creation of photographic works. Innovative thinking is encouraged by prompting students to showcase unique perspectives and thought processes in their photography creation and appreciation. Teamwork is assessed through group projects and activities that test students' collaboration skills and sense of collective honor. Social responsibility is fostered by guiding students to focus on social issues and actively participate in photography-related public welfare activities.

In conclusion, teaching evaluation should focus not only on students' mastery of professional skills but also on their progress in ideological and political literacy, especially through quantitative evaluation in the fields of photography creation and appreciation. By employing diversified evaluation methods and comprehensive evaluation content,

we can better promote students' overall development and cultivate them into well-rounded talents with both professional skills and strong ideological and political literacy.

3.5. Personalization of Teaching Support

Personalized teaching support means that teachers need to provide differentiated guidance and assistance based on the specific circumstances of each student. This may include offering tasks with varying levels of difficulty, providing different degrees of individual tutoring, and adjusting teaching pace to accommodate different students' learning speeds.

After 16 weeks of learning, the photography skills and ideological literacy of the 60 students improved significantly. For example, at the beginning of the course, many students were not proficient in photographic composition and color usage, and their understanding of ideological theory remained limited to textbook knowledge. After this period of in-depth learning and practice, their skills and thinking achieved qualitative improvements.

In in-class assessments, 80% of the students were able to comprehensively use various compositional techniques for photographic creation. They were not only able to skillfully use elements like lighting, tone, and lines but also create artistically compelling works through unique perspectives and compositions.

In the analysis of photographic works, many students were able to accurately grasp the era's spirit and the "red gene" embedded within them. They approached the works from aspects such as theme, composition, and color, delving deeply into the ideological connotations and historical value conveyed by the pieces. For instance, when analyzing a work themed around the red revolution, they could precisely identify the revolutionary spirit and patriotic sentiment expressed, as well as the historical background and characteristics of the time reflected in the work.

In conclusion, after this period of learning, the photography skills and ideological-political literacy of the 60 students have improved significantly.

4. Limitations and Deficiencies

After conducting empirical research on the ideological and political teaching model for foundational vocational photography and videography courses based on the ZPD theory, we identified several limitations and deficiencies that need to be addressed and improved in future teaching practices.

4.1. Differences in Student Participation

Although the teaching model aims to improve the learning outcomes of all students, significant differences in enthusiasm and participation were observed in practice. Some students showed high interest and engagement in the integration of ideological elements, while others appeared relatively passive. Incorporating classroom ideological elements into the appreciation of photography works related to study life, sports, and travel, as well as using many "game tasks," significantly increased the fun of classroom ideology. However, for students uninterested in life, sports, or travel, the results were minimal.

4.2. Limitations of the Feedback Mechanism

Although this course uses tasks of varying difficulty levels to allow students to "learn through play," the appeal of video

game tasks lies in their feedback mechanisms. For teachers, the only task rewards they can offer are scores and verbal praise, which are clearly insufficient to address the diverse task combinations.

To address this issue, we could consider introducing more diverse and enriched reward mechanisms. For instance, different levels of task difficulty can be set, with specific rewards for each level, such as virtual badges or certificates of honor, to stimulate students' enthusiasm for participation. Additionally, linking students' task completion to their course grades could be considered, offering outstanding students more opportunities and resources, such as participation in extracurricular projects or internship opportunities.

Through such solutions, we can not only increase students' investment and engagement in tasks but also better address the needs of diverse task combinations, further advancing the "learning through play" teaching model.

4.3. Completeness of the Evaluation System

Although a diversified teaching evaluation system has been established, it was found during implementation that the evaluation criteria still need further refinement and improvement to more accurately reflect students' progress in professional skills and ideological literacy. It is particularly worth noting that peer evaluations and intergroup evaluations often lack objectivity, as students tend to include personal biases and cannot objectively assess the works.

5. Conclusion

The ideological and political teaching model for photography and videography foundational courses based on the ZPD theory effectively integrates professional knowledge and ideological education, achieving significant results. Differentiated instruction and project-based learning meet the learning needs of students with different foundations, enhancing their professional skills; the integration of ideological elements into photography appreciation and creation cultivates students' social responsibility and cultural confidence; and the teaching strategy incorporating video game elements stimulates students' interest in learning, achieving "learning through play." However, this model also has shortcomings, such as differences in student participation, limitations in the feedback mechanism, and inadequacies in the evaluation system. In the future, further refinement of student groupings and the formulation of personalized teaching plans are needed; more effective feedback mechanisms, such as virtual currency and ranking systems, should be developed; and a more scientific and reasonable evaluation system should be established, combining quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods to comprehensively assess students' professional abilities and ideological literacy. In addition, more diverse methods of ideological and political education, such as skits and documentary creation, need to be explored to enhance the appeal and effectiveness of ideological education. Training in ideological teaching capabilities for teachers should also be strengthened to improve their ability to integrate ideological elements into professional teaching. Through continuous improvement and refinement, this model is expected to cultivate more high-quality technical talents with professional skills and strong ideological literacy, contributing to societal development.

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