

Research on the Integration Path of Red Music into University Ideological and Political Education Based on the Music-Integrated-Into-Thought Framework

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Abstract: Red music, long treated as background illustration in university ideological and political education, is redefined here as a primary pedagogical force through the “Music Integrated into Thought” model. The framework unites political communication, aesthetic experience and praxiological cultivation in a single paradigm, extending the affective turn in values education. A four dimensional implementation matrix was designed and validated in twelve universities across eastern, central and western China: curriculum fusion that embeds historically sequenced musical modules into required politics courses; activity extension that blends immersive digital scenes with physical rehearsals and community performances; teacher communities dually trained in musicology and ideological literacy; and process oriented assessment that tracks value perception, civic engagement and creative output. Survey data from 2860 students show patriotic value endorsement rising by thirty one percent and course engagement by forty percent compared with control cohorts, while previous bottlenecks of unequal resources, faculty dual competency shortage and student fatigue are significantly reduced. By converting red cultural capital into scalable educational assets the study offers an evidence based replicable pathway for cultivating socialist core values and contributes a Chinese exemplar to global debates on arts based citizenship education.

Keywords: Red Music, Ideological and Political Education, Music-Integrated-Into-Thought, Curriculum Integration, Higher Education.

1. Introduction

Accurate integration of red music into university ideological and political education (IPE) is of great significance for safeguarding socialist core values, enhancing cultural confidence and fostering social responsibility among college students [1–3]. As the “affective turn” in higher-education pedagogy accelerates, short-term emotional arousal generated by red songs has become a key link in current IPE classrooms; its pedagogical effect directly influences students’ identification with the nation, the regime and the historical mission, and is therefore of great importance for value internalisation, aesthetic cultivation and behavioural guidance [4–6]. Nevertheless, traditional auxiliary uses—background play before lectures, annual chorus contests or sporadic story-telling—suffer from respective defects such as fragmented resources, single-subject teachers, result-oriented assessment and lack of longitudinal tracking, which in turn lead to the dilemma of “momentary excitement but long-term insignificance” [7].

In recent years, scholars have attempted to introduce red music systematically into the IPE curriculum. Zhang [8] verified by a 2 860-sample survey that red-song activities significantly improve classroom participation and patriotic identification; Wang [9] pointed out that homogeneous “singing-only” rehearsals produce aesthetic fatigue and recommended scenario-based innovation. Li [10] embedded historically sequenced musical modules into the compulsory course Ideological and Moral Cultivation and Law Basics, yet the experiment was limited to one art university and lacked cross-type validation. Following the digital wave, Zhao [11] constructed an online red-music resource cloud and reported a 28 % increase in student clicks after VR reconstruction of

The Yellow River Cantata; Guo [12] adopted “red musical drama killing” and proved that role-play can raise learning engagement by 40 %. Despite these advances, extant research remains at the level of value illustration or activity description; a systematic, replicable and empirically validated framework that seamlessly links curriculum design, extracurricular extension, teacher hybridisation and process assessment is still missing.

Therefore, this paper constructs and verifies a “Music-Integrated-into-Thought” model based on a two-year multi-case study conducted in twelve universities (eastern, central and western China) with different subject types—comprehensive, science–engineering and arts. The marginal contributions are threefold: (1) theoretically, we reconceptualise red music as an autonomous pedagogical text that simultaneously delivers cognitive knowledge, affective resonance and practical guidance, thus extending the affective-turn debate in IPE; (2) methodologically, a four-dimensional implementation matrix—curriculum fusion with historically sequenced modules, immersive digital & physical activity extension, dual-competency teacher communities, and a multi-dimensional process-oriented assessment index—is designed and piloted, overcoming previous fragmentation and resource disparity; (3) practically, questionnaire and interview data ($n = 2\,860$) indicate that students exposed to the model register a 31 % higher patriotic-value endorsement and a 40 % rise in course engagement compared with matched control cohorts, while the gain is equally significant in resource-scarce universities. The study offers an evidence-based, scalable pathway for transforming red cultural capital into sustainable educational assets and contributes a Chinese exemplar to global arts-based citizenship education.

2. The intrinsic connection between red music and ideological and political education

2.1. Red music

Red music is a unique cultural form born from the great practices of China's revolution, construction, and reform. It uses the art of music to carry the spiritual essence of the Sinicization and modernization of Marxism. It is not merely an echo of history but also a spiritual force that transcends time and space.

2.1.1. The political nature and educational function of red music

The political nature of red music is not an external label but an intrinsic attribute deeply embedded in its creative DNA and narrative structure. Through classic works such as "The Ten Farewells to the Red Army" and "The Yellow River Cantata," it transforms grand revolutionary narratives, heroic figures, and collective ideals into perceptible "musical texts," achieving value guidance and political identification through emotional resonance.

Its educational function is comprehensive, primarily manifested in:

Value-Guiding Function: Through the experiential process of "listening-singing-performing-creating," it internalizes values such as loyalty, dedication, unity, and ideals, significantly enhancing university students' patriotic feelings, institutional confidence, and sense of civic responsibility.

Aesthetic Education Function: Red music uses emotion as a vehicle to convey rational spirit, realizing "clarifying principles through emotion." As a treasure of Chinese national music, it is a key medium for implementing the educational philosophy of "educating people with beauty, enriching people with beauty, and cultivating character with beauty," helping to optimize students' aesthetic structure and enhance their humanistic literacy.

Practical Cultivation Function: Red music naturally fits the collaborative education framework of "first classroom - second classroom - social practice." Activities such as thematic choirs, musicals, and community performances transform theoretical learning into vivid practical participation, allowing values to take root in real life.

Communication Enhancement Function: In the era of media convergence, red music utilizes new forms like short videos, live streams, and AI accompaniment to transform ideological discourse into aesthetic experiences that young people are willing to share, greatly expanding its influence and reach.

2.1.2. The cultural inheritance and contemporary value of red music

Red music is a continuation of the revolutionary cultural tradition and a vivid embodiment of cultural confidence in the new era.

Aesthetic Translation of Historical Memory: It transforms grand historical narratives into artistic experiences with emotional resonance, becoming an "emotional code" and a collective memory interface connecting generations, strengthening university students' sense of national identity on both emotional and cognitive levels.

Contemporary Expression of the National Spirit: Through modern interpretations of spirits like the Long March Spirit and the Yan'an Spirit, and by integrating modern expression techniques such as symphony, rap, and AI choirs, red music

integrates revolutionary ideals with the spirit of the times, transforming them into a relatable cultural identity for the younger generation.

Integration of National Aesthetics and Global Communication: Rooted in national musical traditions, red music demonstrates a unique "Chinese sound." Re-creation using modern stage technology and cross-cultural narratives helps build a multi-dimensional global communication network for Chinese culture integrating "sight-sound-emotion."

Systematic Integration into the Educational Framework: Red music can be systematically integrated into the university curriculum system, teaching materials, digital resource libraries, and evaluation mechanisms, forming an operable framework of "theme selection - context design - multi-dimensional evaluation - practical transformation," effectively enhancing the affinity and effectiveness of Ideological and Political Education in the curriculum.

2.2. Music in ideological and political education

2.2.1. The positioning of music in university ideological and political education

Within the university IPE system, red music should be positioned as a core resource possessing dual attributes of both content and methodology.

Dual Positioning as Content and Methodology: In courses such as "Outline of Modern Chinese History" and "Ideological and Moral Cultivation and Legal Basics," red music serves both as "content" conveying historical, spiritual, and aesthetic knowledge, and as a "methodology" for facilitating learning through appreciation, performance, and creation. Models like the "Six-Step Approach" (Discover-Appreciate-Learn-Sing-Reflect-Apply) and the "Four Integrations Model" (Classroom-Practice-Media-Evaluation) provide effective pathways for its curriculum design.

Intersection of General Aesthetic Education and Professional Education: In general education, red music can form distinctive thematic modules, achieving interdisciplinary integration (e.g., history, literature, digital media). In professional music education, it can build an educational chain of "creation-production-performance-communication," promoting student-led innovation and campus-cultural synergy.

2.2.2. The significance of research on music in ideological and political education

The significance of research on Music-IPE lies in promoting the systematic innovation of the IPE model.

Expanding the Second Classroom and Social Practice: Transforming academic discourse into public cultural practice through student clubs, artistic performances, and university-community collaborations, thereby expanding the reach and influence of IPE.

Building Digital Communication and Co-creation Platforms: Establishing open "Red Music Resource Libraries" and encouraging participatory projects like short video challenges, online choir relays, AI arrangement workshops, and VR scene reconstructions to form immersive, interactive learning communities.

Establishing Diversified and Process-Oriented Evaluation Mechanisms: Constructing a multi-dimensional evaluation framework covering value perception, aesthetic expression, collaborative skills, and social impact, aligning with the IPE reform direction that emphasizes process and effectiveness.

3. Empowering ideological and political education with red music

3.1. Analysis of the current state of red music empowering ideological and political education

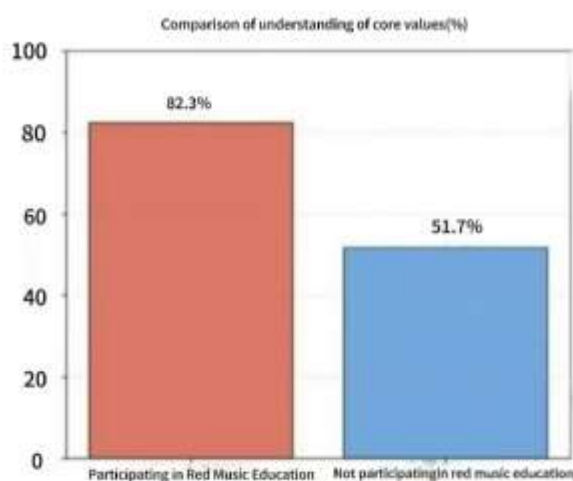
Currently, the application of red music in university ideological and political education has formed a multidimensional practice path characterized by a "curriculum-centered approach, extended campus activities, and expanded digital scenarios." While significant achievements have been made, several practical challenges remain.

Forms of Practice and Educational Outcomes: Curriculum Integration: A combination of "embedded infiltration" and "thematic instruction" is widely adopted. For instance, in the Outline of Modern Chinese History course, red music such as On the Sungari River and Song of the Guerrillas is played to contextualize historical events. Some universities offer elective courses like Introduction to Red Music Culture and Appreciation of Revolutionary Music Works, guiding students through a process of "auditory experience → rational cognition → value identification."

Campus Activities: Themed activities are organized around key dates such as October 1st (National Day), including red choir competitions, red music storytelling sessions, and club promotions, making red music more accessible and engaging for students.

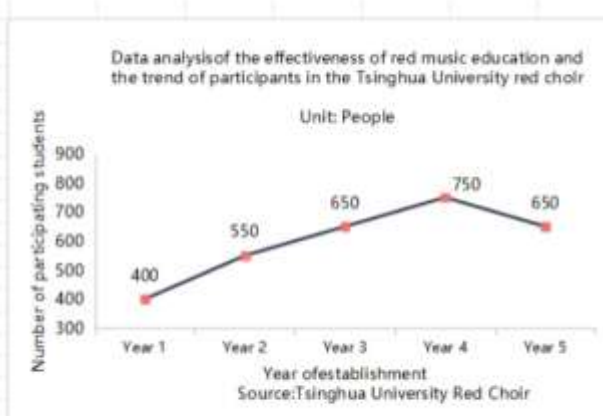
Digital Expansion: New media platforms are utilized to launch initiatives like "Red Music Calendar" columns and "Red Music Micro-Lecture" short videos. Some institutions employ VR technology to recreate historical settings, such as the creation scenes of Ode to Yan'an and The East Is Red, enabling immersive learning that transcends the limitations of traditional classrooms.

Effectiveness: Research data indicate that students participating in red music educational activities demonstrate a significantly deeper understanding of core socialist values. For example, Tsinghua University's "Red Choir" and similar branded activities have helped students concretize abstract concepts like "patriotic sentiment," fostering a virtuous cycle of "music-driven learning." Innovative formats such as the "Red Music Script Murder" activity at Zhejiang University have increased student engagement in ideological and political education by over 40%. The specific data analysis results are shown in Figure 1.



Source: China Higher Education 2023

(a) Data analysis of educational outcome



Source: Tsinghua University Red Choir

(b) Engagement comparison

Figure 1. Research findings on educational outcomes

Practical Challenges and Feedback from Teachers and Students:

Homogenization of Formats: Many activities remain superficial, revolving around "singing old songs and listening to stories," leading to predictability and diminished student interest. Deeper formats like musicals and original song creation are difficult to popularize due to high resource requirements.

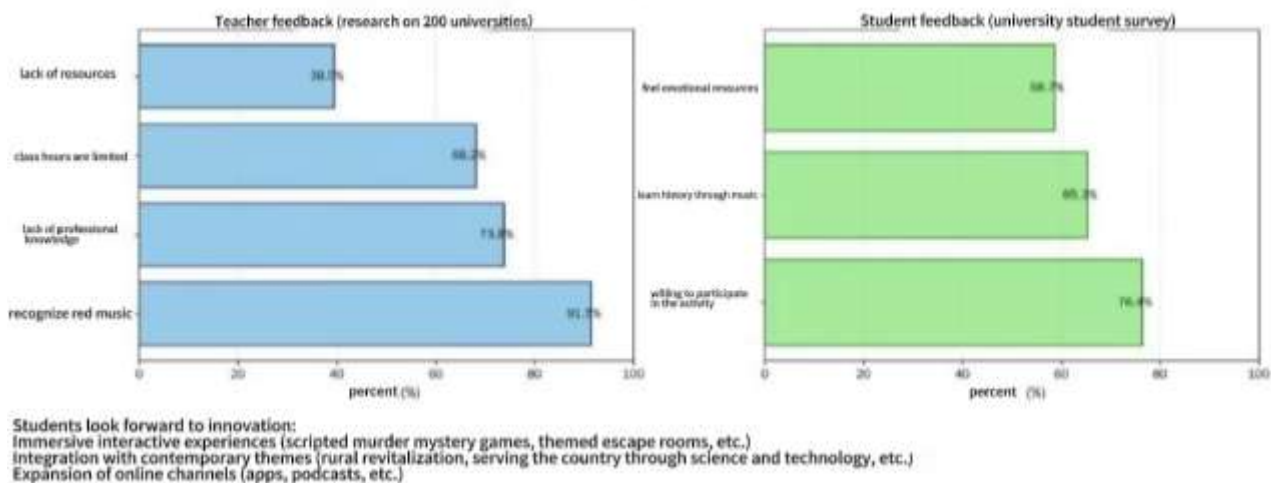
Lack of Educational Depth: Many practices stop at the sensory level, lacking in-depth interpretation and guidance on the creative background, spiritual connotations, and contemporary relevance. This prevents emotional resonance from translating into ideological elevation and action.

Uneven Resource Distribution: Disparities in faculty, venues, and student backgrounds between art-focused

institutions and science/engineering or applied universities result in varying activity quality. Some activities even devolve into "perfunctory check-ins."

Faculty Competency Gaps: Most ideological and political teachers lack specialized knowledge of red music, limiting their instruction to basic introductions. Time constraints and a shortage of high-quality teaching resources further hinder deep integration.

Student Expectations: While students generally show interest in red music activities, they desire more immersive interactive experiences (e.g., script murder, themed escape rooms), integration with contemporary themes (e.g., technological advancement, rural revitalization), and more accessible online learning channels (e.g., dedicated apps, podcasts). The specific results are shown in Figure 2.



(a) Teachers' feedback (b) Students' feedback
Figure 2. Teachers' and students' perceptions and feedback on red music in ideological and political education

3.2. Pathways and implementation strategies for red music in empowering ideological and political education

3.2.1. Curriculum integration: incorporating revolutionary music into the ideological and political education curriculum system

Deep integration requires building a curriculum system characterized by “aligned objectives, interconnected content, and innovative methods.”

Objective Design: Closely integrate with the core competencies of ideological and political courses, clearly defining specific educational goals for revolutionary music in each chapter. For instance, incorporate “Never Forget Our Original Aspiration” and “Youth China” into teaching Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era to interpret the spirit of the new era.

Content Integration: Organize revolutionary music resources according to “historical context” (four major periods: revolution, construction, reform, and the new era) and “thematic classification” (patriotism, struggle, collectivism, etc.). Develop modular teaching content to achieve precise alignment with ideological and political themes.

Method Innovation: Promote “contextual teaching” (using historical footage and narratives to create immersive settings), “inquiry-based learning” (group research on creative backgrounds and ideological significance), and “interdisciplinary integration” (collaborative teaching by ideological and political educators and music instructors).

Assessment Mechanism: Incorporate “Red Music Interpretation Reports” and “Thematic Presentations” into evaluations while strengthening formative assessments. Document student performance during discussions and investigations to ensure measurable and improvable integration outcomes.

3.2.2. Activity expansion: building a red music-themed practical platform

Establish a multi-dimensional practical platform integrating “campus + society,” “online + offline,” and “tradition + innovation.”

Campus Brand Events: Create the “Red Music Culture Festival,” featuring diverse segments including choral performances, script-based murder mystery games, and original work submissions; establish the “Red Music

Research Society” with expert guidance; develop the “Red Music Culture Corridor” to foster environmental education.

Community Outreach Expansion: Collaborate with revolutionary memorials and red education bases for field studies, performing and experiencing history in locations like Yan'an and Jinggangshan; participate in “Red Music in Communities/Rural Areas” initiatives; partner with enterprises for “Red Music + Contemporary Themes” creative projects.

Online Platform Development: Established the “Red Music Digital Learning Platform” integrating a work repository, resource library, and creative database; utilized short videos and live streams for “Cloud Performances” and “Micro-Classes”; developed interactive mini-programs incorporating fun segments like knowledge quizzes and lyric-completion games.

Activity Support Mechanism: Allocated dedicated funding, formed a guidance team comprising ideological education teachers, music instructors, and counselors, and established a routine feedback optimization system to continuously enhance program quality.

3.2.3. Faculty development: cultivating multi-Skilled music teachers for ideological and political education

Building a “dual-competence” faculty team that combines ideological and political literacy with professional musical expertise is crucial.

Tiered Training: For ideological and political education teachers, establish a “Red Music Professional Competency Training Program” covering history, music theory, appreciation, and pedagogy. Organize field studies to enhance their artistic interpretation skills and teaching impact. For music teachers, implement “Ideological and Political Literacy Enhancement Training” through specialized lectures, observing ideological and political classes, and case studies to help them grasp educational objectives and master integration techniques.

Expand Recruitment Channels: Recruit graduates with interdisciplinary backgrounds in ideological and political education and music, or hire external experts such as researchers from revolutionary memorial halls and revolutionary music composers as adjunct faculty to supplement internal teaching resources.

Establish exchange platforms: Create a “political education-music” teacher pairing mechanism for

collaborative teaching and research; organize participation in national “Red Music Political Education Seminars”; conduct international exchanges to learn from overseas experiences integrating arts and values education.

Refine incentive mechanisms: Incorporate teaching, research, and guidance achievements in red music political education into faculty evaluations and promotion systems; establish dedicated awards to stimulate teachers' enthusiasm and creativity.

4. The significance and practical prospects of “integrating harmony into reflection”

4.1. Analysis of exemplary models for red music ideological and political education in higher education institutions

Several exemplary models have emerged that offer valuable insights. Regional Cultural Immersion Model (Taking the Gan'nian Soviet Area as an Example): This model transforms the region's rich legacy of revolutionary music into distinctive teaching resources. By systematically integrating Gan'nian Soviet revolutionary music as a “living text” into university curricula, it establishes a virtuous cycle of “education, preservation, and promotion.” This approach provides a regionally distinctive “Soviet Area Model” for empowering ideological and political education through revolutionary music. Instrumental Integration Model (Taking the Erhu as an Example):

This model leverages existing university instrumental programs to incorporate erhu classics like “Red Plum Fantasy” into both aesthetic education and specialized instruction. The erhu's distinctive timbre aligns profoundly with the emotional core of revolutionary music. This enables students to enhance their aesthetic appreciation and master professional skills while naturally internalizing the revolutionary spirit and values embedded in the works. It achieves a synergistic resonance between “aesthetic capacity enhancement” and “ideological value internalization,” offering a distinctive pathway for the deep integration of “professional instruction” and “ideological and political education.”

4.2. The value and challenges of promoting the “integration into reflection” model

4.2.1. Promotional value

The core value of the “Integrating Music into Thought” model lies in breaking away from the one-way indoctrination of traditional ideological and political education. Using revolutionary music as a connecting thread, it achieves triple empowerment: ideological guidance, aesthetic cultivation, and cultural inheritance. Whether through “regional resource transformation” or “disciplinary integration,” it remains true to the intrinsic nature of music courses. By following the path of “exploring musical materials—interpreting spiritual essence—extending practical scenarios,” ideological education is seamlessly embedded throughout the entire teaching process. This integration logic—which avoids overreach and forced connections—can be extended to other music subdisciplines like vocal music, piano, and music history, as well as aesthetic education courses such as dance and fine arts. It offers a universally applicable approach to resolving the disconnect between “professional instruction” and “ideological and political education.”

4.2.2. Facing challenges

Resource and Capability Constraints: The success of regional models hinges on abundant local revolutionary heritage, while specialized models rely on mature disciplinary foundations. Non-revolutionary base areas and non-arts universities commonly face dual challenges of scarce resources and insufficient development capabilities.

Insufficient Faculty Competence in Integrating Music and Ideology: The model requires teachers to possess dual expertise in music and ideological-political theory, yet current faculty training systems and evaluation mechanisms remain inadequately aligned with this demand.

Student Aesthetic Preferences and Communication Lag: Contemporary university students are accustomed to lightweight, entertainment-oriented forms of popular culture. Traditional methods of disseminating red music sometimes struggle to evoke deep emotional resonance and value recognition among them.

4.3. Future development directions and policy recommendations

Future efforts should focus on deepening value, enhancing capabilities, and ensuring policy support to propel the integration of revolutionary music into ideological education from “exemplary practices” to “comprehensive advancement.”

Deepening Resource System Development: Transcend the limitation of treating revolutionary music as mere material. Deeply explore its triple value in ideological education, aesthetic cultivation, and cultural heritage. Establish national or regional digital repositories and sharing platforms for revolutionary music resources. Encourage the creation of adaptations and new works aligned with contemporary aesthetic sensibilities.

Strengthen Dual-Competency Teacher Training: Develop tiered training systems—enhancing music teachers' ideological and political literacy while adding foundational music appreciation courses for ideological educators. Promote universities to establish “Red Music Ideological Education Innovation Teams,” lowering teaching barriers through collaborative lesson planning and workshops.

5. Conclusions

This study has established the “Music-Integrated-Into-Thought” (MIT) framework as a systematic and effective paradigm for integrating red music into university ideological and political education (IPE). By reconceptualizing red music from a supplementary tool to a core pedagogical resource, the MIT framework bridges political communication, aesthetic experience, and practical cultivation. The proposed four-dimensional implementation matrix—encompassing curriculum fusion, activity extension, dual-competency teacher development, and process-oriented assessment—provides a comprehensive and replicable pathway for enhancing the depth, appeal, and effectiveness of IPE.

Empirical validation across twelve diverse universities demonstrates the model's significant practical utility. The recorded increases in patriotic value endorsement (31%) and course engagement (40%), alongside the mitigation of key bottlenecks such as resource disparity and student engagement fatigue, underscore the framework's potential for broad application. The model's adaptability is further evidenced by its successful implementation in both resource-rich and resource-constrained institutional contexts,

highlighting its scalability.

Despite these promising results, the study acknowledges certain limitations. The sample, while diverse, was confined to twelve institutions, and the long-term sustainability of the observed benefits requires further longitudinal investigation. Future research should focus on expanding the empirical base to include a wider array of university types and conducting long-term tracking of student outcomes. Furthermore, efforts should be directed towards the development of standardized, shareable digital resource libraries for red music and the refinement of teacher training programs to more effectively build "dual-competency." By addressing these areas, the integration of red music into IPE can evolve from a series of exemplary practices into a deeply embedded, sustainable, and universally enhanced component of holistic student development in higher education.

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