

Teaching Reform of Dialogic Pedagogy in University Morality and Rule of Law Course

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Abstract: The rise of short-video applications has reshaped the attention of college students and introduced a new teaching problem in the subject of Morality and the Rule of Law. Traditional teacher-led, monologue-style speech is not suitable for digital natives; thus, they do not feel involved and fail to learn moral values. Based on Karl Jaspers' existential pedagogical theory of "awakening", it is proposed that various forms of dialogue should be utilised to promote the progress of education. The three special systems will be arranged in a certain manner to achieve the above changes. To address the problems of large-class restrictions, irregular selection of the syllabus and varying classrooms, etc., this paper puts forward an all-round improvement plan. The groups of subjects have been divided, standardised pre-lesson support manuals have been developed, a matrix-based classroom management system has been used, and a long-term formative assessment system has also been established. According to the test results, it was found that changing from one-way broadcast to dynamic intersubjective debate can increase students' interest and raise the standard of teaching. Finally, some practical ways have been put forward in this paper to carry out structural changes in higher education institutions.

Keywords: Dialogic Pedagogy; Morality and Rule of Law Course; Higher Education; Jaspers; Student Engagement

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1. Introduction: Research Background and Motivation

With the rise of short-video apps such as TikTok and Douyin, the attention of college students has also been divided. Customised suggestion engines give people many small pleasures that can divert their attention from boredom. Therefore, the traditional long-duration scholarly talks are boring and have been losing interest over time, resulting in a drop in student engagement and rendering such passive teaching methods ineffective.

This cognitive reorientation poses a particular challenge to the mandatory curriculum Morality and the Rule of Law, which is one of the main ways to educate students morally in class. Moral education is not about knowledge but rather cultivates character and awareness of life. However, in practice, most classes are conducted as large lectures in which student participation is minimal. Therefore, it is likely that the students will become tired of listening to the lecture and stop paying attention. Given this pedagogical challenge, this study proposes an innovative instructional approach that shifts from traditional one-way discourse to proactive multi-channel communication, aiming to better align teaching methods with the cognitive habits of contemporary learners. Conceptually, it can be seen that intangible virtues are carried by organised talks. Experimentally, it has introduced new forms of teacher engagement and structured educational environments to renew students' motivation to

learn in class.

Bakhtin (1981) pointed out in his study of education that meaning can be formed in various ways by several people, and Freire (1970) criticised the “banking concept” of education that keeps students passive and opposed it with problem-posing education. Robin Alexander (2020) and Neil Mercer (2019) are also some modern scholars who have put forward these ideas in organised classes. Alexander (2020) believes that productive dialogic instruction should have a purpose; Mercer (2019) has found that cooperative linguistic negotiation can create a sense of togetherness among students. However, relatively few studies have been conducted so far, and what has been done is rather general in nature; practical plans for organising dialogue activities under strict time constraints in large lecture halls that are easily distracted by many short videos have not been put forward. This study adds to the above work an actual case.

2. Theoretical Basis and Re-notation of Dialogic Teaching Reform

At the base of this change is Karl Jaspers’ philosophy of existence. In his work *The Idea of the University* (1959), Jaspers believed that education is a process of awakening. True pedagogy is not the one-way transmission of knowledge from teachers to students; rather, it is an all-round activity that promotes the all-around development of all kinds of intelligence in students. Capacity cannot be achieved by repeated drilling; it will only arise from sincere, mutual existence. As shown in the *Morality and the Rule of Law* syllabus, ethical honesty, public accountability and legal respect are not facts to be listed but rather existential attitudes. In order to achieve good teaching, the lecture hall should provide a good atmosphere that can motivate students to study logically and positively. The teacher will present some reasons to help the students learn good behaviour voluntarily.

The plan must be reasonable and consistent with the goals of moral education. Martin Buber (1970) proposed that according to dialogue theory, true growth for individuals is achieved in the “I-Thou” relationship, which is characterized by mutual recognition, respect and openness in communication; otherwise, it will be an impersonal “I-It” relationship. The teaching method of “I-It” will be psychologically resistant. At the same time, in the construction of an “I-Thou” structure, the learner’s own freedom is also respected. Ethics are studied and justified by means of cooperative mental inquiry. Conversation is therefore the fundamental mode of communication in which moral education can be transmitted.

At the same time, we need to clarify what we mean by “dialogic instruction” and correct the error in education. Introducing occasional questions in the presentation class and having the students answer rapidly as a group does not constitute dialogue. Nicholas Burbules (1993) is of the opinion that the above-mentioned superficial behaviour is a basic initiation-response-evaluation (IRE) cycle. Such a routine is entirely monologic; the teacher retains authority and uses the students’ words only to confirm the lesson that will be taught. At the same time, dialogic instruction is now a system of teaching that can be explained by extending questions, cognitive conflicts, cooperation among students, and gaining awareness. It is necessary to create a complex scenario without an obvious solution and encourage learners to contribute ideas at all times in the subsequent discussion. Therefore, the communication structure will no longer be centred around one person; instead, it will be a network form with more communication among learners.

The proposed dialogic approach is not only grounded in Western philosophical traditions but also resonates with contemporary Chinese educational scholarship. As Li & Liu (2025) argue, dialogue education—rooted in both Confucian heuristic teaching and Socratic maieutics—offers a key theoretical framework for transforming ideological and political courses by emphasizing intersubjectivity and deconstructing unidirectional power relations. The national mission of “fostering virtue through education” (立德树人) has been systematically theorized by Qian (2024), who constructs a tripartite moral framework encompassing public virtues, social ethics, and personal morality. Policy directives such as the *Guidelines for Curriculum Ideological and Political Construction* (Ministry of Education, 2020) further mandate instructional innovation through student-centered methods including group seminars and classroom debates. These academic and policy foundations affirm that the dialogic reform proposed herein is a practical pathway aligned with China’s own educational objectives, not merely a Western pedagogical import.

3. Deficiencies of Traditional Teaching and the Urgency of Reform

The traditional arrangement of the classroom for the “Morality and the Rule of Law” course is a monologue system that has been around for a long time, often called a “sage on stage”, and under this structure, the physical and auditory arrangement of the academic lecture hall is oriented to favour a single speaker. There is only one microphone at the back of the podium, and the groups of students are seated in fixed-row, tiered auditorium seats facing forward. The above arrangement is a basic, linear manner of conveying information, and consequently, the sense of energy for the listeners is diminished.

However, this way of doing things has serious problems; that is, students’ will to learn and self-study are lost. If the lecture is a continuous monologue, the function of the learner will be reduced to rote memorisation and passive listening; this will cause quick mental fatigue. The storage capacity of the human short-term memory is relatively small, so not all long-term auditory information can be actively organised or studied thoroughly in terms of concepts (Biwer et al., 2020). Because they lack a structured starting point for speaking, asking questions or raising objections, students easily lose interest in the lesson and feel that school is not connected to the way they naturally organize knowledge outside of school.

To understand the overall purpose of educational reform, one should study how the academic lecture theatre is currently being used. With the arrival of modern short-video culture, one of the main rivals to a learner’s attention span is now a powerful mobile phone that offers various suggestions for peak psychological engagement. A student looking at a traditional lecture will find no sense of suspense in a particular situation; it is only a plain slide and a general introduction to the topic. At the same time, when they look at the display, they are motivated to learn; thus, learning will be achieved promptly. Traditional teaching cannot win the fierce competition of attention through its traditional and passive teaching mode.

From a pedagogical design perspective, purely unidirectional instruction often lacks the emotional resonance, interactive tension, and contextual immediacy that are essential for sustaining attention in an age of digital distraction. As a result, such instructional techniques may struggle to compete with the highly engaging algorithms of short-video platforms. This is not a failure of educational intent, but rather a mismatch between traditional delivery methods and the evolving cognitive patterns of the current student cohort. If the discourse of scholars on constitutional and legal theories is only an expression of statutory provisions without exploring the chaotic human conflicts and critical legal dramas that gave rise to these texts, the physical setting will lack cognitive power and students’ attention will inevitably wander to the much more attractive digital world. In order to re-focus, the lecture itself needs to create a sense of urgency within its environment by means of a strong instructional structure, making students feel that they must learn now out of the need to do so.

Even in the modern classroom, although teachers aim to spark interest, it is often done in a superficial, perfunctory way. Generally speaking, this restriction on interaction is considered a form of passivity; although it seems to be a kind of participation, it does not challenge the overall speech authority and teaching system set by the teacher. A lecturer may be silent for a while and then ask a question based on what is shown on the screen; they can randomly select a student to read a sentence aloud or start an off-the-record conversation among the students. However, from a cognitive activation perspective, such practices often remain at a superficial level. They require minimal intellectual engagement, lack meaningful connection to learners’ personal experiences, and consequently fail to stimulate higher-order thinking. This represents a limitation in instructional design rather than a deficiency in the educational system as a whole.

The educational effect of this shallowness is that it fails to touch the deep-seated values of the people or stir up their emotions. Philosophical commitments, changes in the ethical system and construction of moral identity are not simply data memorisation or submissive obedience. Therefore, in order to deal with the new information, people need to restructure their existing value systems; they will be mentally confused and experience psychological turmoil (Biwer et al., 2020). When the students’ participation in learning is shallow, it has not reached this level. Learners can quickly learn to give the answers that educators want to hear, follow social norms, and appear to be in line with society in their studies; however, their own inner values, technology habits and moral systems are unchanged. Therefore, it is necessary to reform the entire system of teaching urgently.

4. Design of Diverse Dialogic Teaching Models

To address the systemic problems of the old model of monologic teaching, this paper presents and tests three new dialogical teaching methods. Therefore, the customisation of the teaching methods aimed to reduce the dominant role of lectures and

foster deep ethical consciousness among students through all sorts of practical applications in the course on Morality and the Rule of Law.

4.1 Mode 1: Conversational Storytelling Dialogue - Scenario Construction and Empathy Resonance

The first structure of the pedagogy reform has been named “Conversational Storytelling Dialogue”. In other words, a typical story about ethics and law will be introduced instead of theoretical explanation. Instead of presenting a general rule of morality and law vaguely, the teacher will draw many types from historical legal cases, corporate disputes, etc., to create a general situation of people. The story shows a basic contradiction between the structure of the official rulebook and people’s sense of right and wrong, or among different duties citizens have. To carry out this approach, the Space and Interrelationships of the students in the class will be reconfigured as a cooperative-inquiry environment, and under the direction of the teacher as a storyteller, probing questions will be posed systematically to explore all sides of the case.

The actualisation of this way will be to cultivate deep empathy among learners by completely changing their perception of the subject matter. Learners are not to be detached observers or passive evaluators of the case; instead, they should be encouraged to actively immerse themselves in the situation and take on the role of participants. The teacher will gradually ask questions to guide students’ thinking in the discussion. First, the students need to determine the immediate environment and emotional circumstances of the party, which are dictated by actual circumstances. Then the teacher has the students explore why this is the case and may find that there is a conflict between strict statutory language and practical ethical fairness. Finally, the query will force students to present a rational, group oral defence of the chosen operating plan and take the position of that party. To tell a good story that can make people feel emotions deeply is to bring the narrative to life. It captures the students’ attention and has many characteristics of electronic media, thereby motivating them to study deeply and diligently learn the important content of morals and law.

4.2 Mode 2: Teacher-Student Co-teaching Mode - Role Inversion and Subjectivity Activation

The second is a “Teacher-Student Co-teaching Model”, which can motivate students to learn more by having the teachers assume the role of the students for a time. Based on the above method, specific micro-subjects in the syllabus, such as those related to the practical performance of civic duties, consumer protection laws, environmental regulations and social equity in different areas, etc., are divided among learner groups for joint instruction. It is not a typical basic, one-way demonstration of teaching where the teacher stands silently at the back of the classroom grading homework and all students are passive recipients of knowledge. Instead, it is carefully planned to be a close-knit cooperative teaching performance, and the students’ collective and the main tutor will jointly guide the development process of the lecture segment.

The actual construction of this framework is divided into two stages and works together. The group of learners begins the class by putting forward an empirical question, a field observation or a subtle criticism of a social problem at present related to the topic. Such an exhibition can spark a desire in the students to take the initiative and, thus, become active producers and observers of knowledge rather than passive receivers of information. Shortly after the learner’s presentation, the lead educator will return to the stage for an immediate, live-chat reflection with the student speaker and will not simply offer a score or close the debate. The teacher will guide the students in thinking and connect their practical exploration with the historical background of schools, relevant laws and regulations, moral principles, etc., to help them build a comprehensive theoretical system. This fluid interaction model shows all the students that in a scholarly debate, different viewpoints should be respected, and thus the teaching environment will no longer be one-way information transmission but a collaborative exploration of knowledge.

4.3 Mode 3: Situational Interactive Dialogue - Issue-based Debate and Value Clarification.

The third is the framework of “Situational Interactive Dialogue”; in short, it is an organised form of academic conversation focused on certain problems and vocational role-playing activities. Thus, it can solve the basic teaching problem of value education. Instead of giving an order or exercising administrative power, the teacher can create a good environment for the idea of a virtual legislative investigation, a fictional public policy council meeting, or a company’s ethics committee.

Students are given elaborate, pre-set occupations and public positions, such as public interest attorneys, corporate directors, government regulatory enforcement officers and grassroots movement leaders in local areas; these various roles often have

differing or even conflicting aims, access to resources, ethics, etc. In light of the above discussion and in accordance with organisational rules, students are expected to examine the issues collaboratively. In the interview, learners should clearly state their views and provide reasons or supporting materials; at the same time, they need to protect the socio-legal view they hold and respond flexibly to other students' counterarguments. Given that the role-play has structural problems and lacks necessary materials, students cannot passively receive general knowledge; instead, they must participate in direct experience to learn. Through communication, they have been introduced to the reasons why there are deficiencies in the system, relevant judicial experience, trade-offs among interests, etc. This practical way to teach is no longer passive; instead, everyone in the collaborative framework must reason analytically, construct integrated verbal proofs, and thus come to know the details of legal governance.

5. Universal Bottlenecks in the Large-Scale Promotion of Dialogic Teaching

5.1 Strategic Constraints: Scale, Topics and Preparation Imbalances

After some experiments, dialogic pedagogy has been unable to expand to a large scale because of the problem of a small structure. The necessary core subjects, such as Morality and the Rule of Law, generally have a large number of lecture units and exceed 100 students. The paradigm of mass instruction can improve the institutional efficiency of the country, but it is an anti-dialogue system that does not naturally meet people's need for proximity, attention and ample speaking time. In a large hall, if there is no regulation of the spontaneous discussions among students, it can quickly become a scene of administrative disarray or be deemed minor peripheral noise because only a few departing students actively engage in such conversations. Coordinating many conversations at the same time is too much for a single teacher's mind, so they have to switch to one-way teaching. When there are many non-essential factors that take up working memory, people's cognition will be exhausted (Sweller, 2020).

There is also a problem of consistent selection in the design stage of dialogic pedagogy. In order to be effective in terms of education, a course should, at the same time, maintain high academic standards and stimulate the authentic curiosity of students who have lost interest due to a scattered focus. The theme is too general; therefore, it has not aroused the students' desire to engage in free discussion because it lacks concrete concepts and an intrinsic will to interact. Alternatively, to meet the demands for entertainment and popularity, one might focus on fashionable online controversies or superficial scandals; though such conversations are pleasant, they lack the substance of learning. Due to a long-standing problem of being too theoretical and out-of-touch, numerous attempts have been made to improve the construction method.

In a good dialogue teaching environment, one must first reallocate the burden of learning among students to remove passivity from learning. Learners should have a good grasp of the basic knowledge in the relevant areas to take part in creating stories, collaborating to teach others, etc. Without this pre-lesson input, the discourse turn will be a group of unawareness with no analytical meaning. A primary reason for this is the students' low level of self-study ability and large differences in their preparation. Many freshmen who have left the strict supervision of secondary school have not formed autonomous self-management habits or the ability to analyze problems independently; this is a necessary attribute for independent study in college, and this deficiency has been pointed out in recent assessments of undergraduate self-regulated learning (Anthonysamy, 2021). When given general reading tasks, a large number of students either perform shallow scanning or do not complete the assignment at all. Therefore, the professor finds that there is a sharp division in the class; a few well-equipped students can speak fluently, but most are too shy and cannot participate in the dialogue.

5.2 Uncontrollable Cognitive Deviations and Time Management Oversights

The underlying reason is that the rules governing free will have never been fixed. Unlike the original monologue, which is set in time and structured rigidly, it gives managers a feeling of stability, but it has loose interactivity, irregular progress, and may be prone to missing out on instruction.

The first hazard is cognitive bias; that is to say, although students are eager to express themselves, their ethical logic may be flawed, their knowledge of legislative codes incorrect, and their concepts misunderstanding. If the educator is too harsh in their response, they will shut down the conversation; if, on the other hand, their response is too passive, such wrong ideas will go uncorrected and could harm the study of the entire group. Next, a danger is the lack of time. Authentic discourse is

investigative and extended; if there is a considerable mental conflict among the learner groups, it may consume thirty minutes of the lecture period and fail to meet the basic demands of the curriculum in time. To address the two problems above, a high level of instant teaching talent, strategic flexibility and systematic mediation rules is required—skills that many traditional educators have not been trained in. Teachers have to choose between giving students the opportunity to speak freely in class and arranging the class according to the tight schedule; thus, there is a conflict in function and limited wide-ranging application.

6. Conclusion

A well-designed plan for dialogue in the college class “Morality and the Rule of Law” will help address the current problem of students’ lack of concentration due to the Internet. Given that there are significant changes in students’ minds due to algorithmic short-video media, it can be concluded that authoritarian management is not appropriate and proactive educational creativity needs to be employed to deal with student alienation. According to the idea of Karl Jaspers that schooling is a process of enlightenment in existential philosophy, the initiative has gone beyond the traditional model of monologue and created lively spaces for collaborative exploration and genuine ethical joint construction in the lecture hall.

Through narrative methods, cooperative teaching and the creation of contextual learning, drama and emotional expression can be restored in the classroom. First, there will be an organised system of stratified thematic frameworks and mandatory pre-lesson preparation aids; second, there will be a grid-based small-team administration, so it is hoped that, in large-scale university teaching, interest will be expanded in structure while the depth of thought and scholarship are maintained. An additional reason is that now there is an integrated cumulative evaluation, which can help maintain students’ motivation in their studies over a long period; thus, it is expected that learning goals and social values will be achieved when students actively participate in studying and learning together.

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