



GOBERNANZA CURRICULAR DE LA EDUCACIÓN IDEOLÓGICA Y MORAL EN UNIVERSIDADES DEL NOROESTE CHINO

CURRICULUM GOVERNANCE OF IDEOLOGICAL AND MORAL EDUCATION IN NORTHWEST CHINESE UNIVERSITIES

Bai Yanling^{1,2}

E-mail: yanling@graduate.utm.my

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-3577-1089>

Lee Huan Yik¹

E-mail: huanyiklee@utm.my

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0649-7663>

Aida A. Rahman^{1*}

E-mail: aidarahman@utm.my

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5749-8917>

¹ Language Academy, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 81310, Johor Bahru, Malaysia

² Xinhua College of Ningxia University, 750021, Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, China

*Autor para correspondencia

Suggested citation (APA, seventh ed.)

Yanling, B., Huan Yik, L., & Rahman, A. A. (2026). Gobernanza curricular de la educación ideológica y moral en universidades del noroeste chino. *Revista Conrado*, 22(111), e5292.

ABSTRACT

Curriculum-Based Ideological and Moral Education has become a fundamental component of higher education policy in China, aimed at strengthening students' ethical, civic, and moral development by integrating these principles across all academic disciplines. However, higher education institutions differ considerably in the ways they interpret, organize, and implement this curriculum mandate through their institutional documents. The objective of this study was to comparatively analyse the curriculum governance of Curriculum-Based Ideological and Moral Education in three universities located in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region of northwest China, representing a comprehensive university, a vocational undergraduate university, and a private application-oriented college. A qualitative research approach was adopted through document analysis of institutional policies, implementation plans, curriculum templates, course syllabi, teaching evaluation instruments, and professional development documents. The findings identified three predominant models of curriculum governance. The comprehensive university exhibited a highly structured and systematic model characterized by strong institutional codification. The vocational undergraduate university demonstrated an evaluation-oriented model focused on the operationalization of teaching processes. In contrast, the private application-oriented college presented an integrated and practice-oriented model, allowing greater flexibility

in adapting national guidelines to its institutional context. These differences reflect the influence of governance structures, curriculum management strategies, and organizational priorities on the implementation of the same national education policy. This study provides an analytical framework for understanding how higher education institutions recontextualize national policies and contributes to the advancement of knowledge on curriculum governance within the context of value-oriented educational reform.

Keywords:

Ideological education, Institutional textualization, Policy enactment, Higher Education Governance.

RESUMEN

La Educación Ideológica y Moral basada en el Currículo se ha convertido en un componente fundamental de las políticas educativas de la educación superior en China, orientado a fortalecer la formación ética, cívica y moral de los estudiantes mediante la integración de estos principios en todas las disciplinas académicas. Sin embargo, las instituciones de educación superior presentan diferencias significativas en la forma en que interpretan, organizan e implementan este mandato curricular a través de sus documentos institucionales. El objetivo de este estudio fue analizar comparativamente la gobernanza curricular de la Educación Ideológica y Moral basada en el



Currículo en tres universidades de la Región Autónoma Hui de Ningxia, en el noroeste de China, representativas de una universidad integral, una universidad vocacional de grado y un colegio privado de orientación aplicada. Se empleó un enfoque cualitativo mediante análisis documental de políticas institucionales, planes de implementación, plantillas curriculares, programas de asignatura, instrumentos de evaluación docente y documentos de desarrollo profesional. Los resultados identificaron tres modelos predominantes de gobernanza curricular. La universidad integral evidenció un modelo altamente estructurado y sistemático, caracterizado por una fuerte codificación institucional. La universidad vocacional mostró un modelo orientado a la evaluación y a la operacionalización de los procesos docentes. Por su parte, el colegio privado presentó un modelo integrado y centrado en la práctica, con mayor flexibilidad para adaptar los lineamientos nacionales al contexto institucional. Estas diferencias reflejan la influencia de las estructuras de gobernanza, las estrategias de gestión curricular y las prioridades organizacionales sobre la implementación de una misma política educativa. El estudio aporta un marco analítico para comprender cómo las instituciones de educación superior recontextualizan las políticas nacionales y contribuye al conocimiento sobre la gobernanza curricular en contextos de reforma educativa orientada por valores.

Palabras clave: Ideological education, Institutional textualization, Policy enactment, Higher Education Governance

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum-Based Ideological and Moral Education (CIME) has emerged as one of the most significant educational reforms shaping contemporary higher education in China. Within the broader context of national educational modernization, Chinese universities are expected not only to cultivate disciplinary knowledge and professional competencies but also to foster students' moral character, civic responsibility, and ideological awareness. This educational orientation reflects the long-standing principle of Lide Shuren ("fostering virtue through education"), which positions moral cultivation as the fundamental mission of higher education and as an essential component of national development strategies (He et al., 2021; Ho, 2025). Rather than treating ideological education as the responsibility of specialized political theory courses, recent reforms advocate its systematic integration across all academic disciplines, reinforcing a holistic vision in which every course contributes to students' ethical and civic development (Liu, 2025).

This policy direction was consolidated with the publication of the Guidelines for the Construction of Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education

Institutions by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China in 2020, which established CIME as a nationwide policy mandate requiring universities to integrate ideological, civic, and moral education into curriculum planning, instructional design, classroom activities, and assessment practices (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2020). Consequently, CIME has become a core mechanism through which higher education institutions seek to align disciplinary learning with broader national goals of value cultivation and holistic student development. Universities are therefore expected to promote a model of "whole-staff, whole-process, and all-round education," in which ideological and moral development is embedded throughout the educational experience rather than confined to isolated curricular components (Ho, 2025; Liu et al., 2021).

The implementation of CIME has generated substantial academic interest, particularly regarding how ideological and moral elements can be integrated into disciplinary teaching without compromising disciplinary integrity. Existing research demonstrates that educators across diverse fields—including foreign language education, engineering, and the social sciences—have adopted multiple pedagogical approaches, such as discourse-based value exploration, thematic instructional design, and authentic situation-based learning activities, to connect disciplinary knowledge with moral and civic education (Liu, 2022; Mei, 2024). At the same time, scholars have identified persistent challenges associated with policy implementation, including conceptual ambiguity, tensions between disciplinary objectives and ideological expectations, uneven institutional support, and considerable variation in teachers' preparedness to enact value-oriented curricula (He et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021). Collectively, these studies suggest that CIME should not be understood as a uniform or purely technical educational reform but rather as a complex policy process whose implementation is mediated by disciplinary traditions, institutional conditions, and educators' professional interpretations.

Despite this expanding body of scholarship, important gaps remain in understanding how CIME is translated from national policy into institutional governance. Existing studies have primarily focused on either macro-level analyses examining national ideological frameworks and policy discourses or micro-level investigations exploring teachers' beliefs, classroom practices, and professional agency (Biesta et al., 2017; He et al., 2021; Priestley et al., 2015). Although these perspectives have generated valuable insights, they provide only a partial understanding of policy implementation because they largely overlook the meso level of governance, where national directives are interpreted, formalized, and translated into institutional practices (Ho, 2025).

Universities occupy a critical intermediary position within China's higher education governance system. Rather than simply transmitting national policies to academic staff, universities actively reinterpret and recontextualize policy directives through internal regulations, curriculum standards, quality assurance systems, teaching evaluation frameworks, and administrative procedures (Mok & Han, 2017; Wen & Marginson, 2023). Institutional policy documents therefore function as key governance instruments that shape curriculum priorities, define implementation expectations, and establish the organizational conditions under which teachers enact educational reforms. Previous studies on higher education governance indicate that these institutional frameworks significantly influence curriculum development, academic work, and teaching practices by structuring organizational routines, evaluation mechanisms, and professional expectations (Li et al., 2023; Marginson, 2016). Nevertheless, systematic analyses examining how universities textualize and institutionalize CIME within their internal governance documents remain remarkably limited.

Building upon these theoretical perspectives, Ball & Braun's (2012) framework of policy enactment further explains that educational policies acquire meaning only through the situated processes by which institutions interpret, translate, and operationalize official directives. Rather than viewing implementation as a straightforward transfer from policy formulation to classroom practice, this perspective conceptualizes universities as active policy actors that mediate, reinterpret, and reshape reform agendas according to their organizational cultures, leadership priorities, resource conditions, and governance structures. Consequently, policy enactment is not a linear process but a dynamic interaction between national policy expectations and institutional realities, in which universities actively construct the meanings, priorities, and practices associated with educational reform. Applying this framework to CIME therefore highlights the importance of examining institutional documents not merely as administrative instruments of compliance but as discursive spaces through which policy is reconstructed, negotiated, and embedded within curriculum governance.

This perspective is particularly relevant within China's highly differentiated higher education system, where universities vary substantially in governance capacity, institutional missions, administrative arrangements, and responses to national reforms (Li et al., 2023; Mok & Han, 2017; Wen & Marginson, 2023). Comprehensive research universities generally possess mature governance systems, formalized curriculum management mechanisms, and institution-wide implementation frameworks that facilitate coordinated policy translation (Marginson, 2016). By contrast, vocational undergraduate universities commonly

operate within applied and competency-based governance models, where curriculum development is closely linked to teaching standards, evaluation indicators, and performance assessment (Kennedy, 2014). Private application-oriented institutions frequently rely on more decentralized governance structures, adapting national policies through program-level initiatives that emphasize employability, professional competence, and local institutional priorities rather than comprehensive institution-wide regulations. These organizational differences suggest that universities are unlikely to textualize CIME uniformly; instead, institutional governance arrangements shape distinctive ways of interpreting, formalizing, and operationalizing national policy directives.

Against this backdrop, the present study focuses on three universities located in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region of China that represent contrasting institutional profiles and governance models. Institution A is a leading regional comprehensive university designated under China's Project 211, characterized by strong governance capacity, coordinated curriculum management, and well-established institutional policy mechanisms. Institution B is a provincial public vocational university recently upgraded to bachelor's-level status, reflecting the evaluation-oriented governance model typical of China's emerging vocational undergraduate sector. Xinhua College of Institution A represents a private application-oriented institution characterized by comparatively flexible governance arrangements, decentralized curriculum practices, and an emphasis on program-level innovation. Examining these three institutions provides a valuable opportunity to explore how different organizational contexts mediate the translation of identical national CIME directives into diverse institutional policy texts.

Although scholarship on CIME continues to expand, comparative evidence regarding institutional policy textualization remains limited. Existing studies rarely investigate how universities with different governance structures construct internal CIME policy frameworks or how institutional contexts influence the transformation of national policy into curriculum regulations, teaching standards, and evaluation systems. Consequently, limited attention has been devoted to understanding the mechanisms through which universities mediate value-oriented curriculum reform at the meso level or how institutional governance shapes the interpretive space within which teachers exercise professional agency (Biesta et al., 2017; Marginson, 2016; Mok & Han, 2017; Priestley et al., 2015). Addressing this gap is essential for advancing theoretical understandings of policy enactment while also providing deeper insight into the organizational processes that underpin curriculum reform in Chinese higher education.

Accordingly, this study employs qualitative document analysis (Bowen, 2009) to examine institutional CIME policy documents, curriculum standards, and teaching evaluation frameworks across the three universities. Guided by Ball's (1993, 2006) concepts of policy-as-text and policy-as-discourse, together with Ball & Braun's (2012) framework of policy enactment, the study analyzes how national CIME directives are interpreted, textualized, and operationalized within contrasting institutional contexts. Specifically, the study aims to identify and compare the institutional patterns through which universities translate national CIME policy into internal governance arrangements and to develop a typology of institutional policy textualization that contributes to a deeper understanding of curriculum governance and policy enactment within value-oriented reforms in Chinese higher education.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive research design grounded in policy sociology. Its analytical orientation is guided primarily by Ball's conceptualizations of policy-as-text, policy-as-discourse, and policy enactment. These perspectives position institutional documents not as neutral carriers of national directives but as socially constructed artifacts that reflect organizational histories, ideological priorities, and governance logics. From this standpoint, policy texts are regarded as contingent and open to interpretation, while policy enactment is understood as a situated process through which institutions translate and recontextualize national policy into institutional frameworks. Anchoring the study in Ball's theoretical framework provides a coherent lens for analyzing how universities frame, construct, and regulate Curriculum-Based Ideological and Moral Education (CIME) through their internal policy documents.

The study is interpretive in nature, seeking to understand how meaning is constructed within institutional texts and how discursive and structural forces shape these constructions. Document analysis serves as the principal methodological strategy, enabling an examination of how policy meanings are encoded in institutional language and how textual formulations establish expectations, legitimize particular understandings of CIME, and shape teachers' professional roles. While Ball's framework provides the theoretical foundation, Bowen's (2009) approach to document analysis offers methodological guidance for interpreting textual context, institutional positioning, and organizational purpose. Accordingly, the analysis extends beyond description to examine how institutional documents function as sites of ideological articulation, governance practice, and policy translation.

The study draws on institutional documents collected from three universities in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region of China. As described in the Introduction, these institutions differ substantially in governance structures, organizational histories, and curriculum management systems. Rather than treating them primarily as individual case studies, they are conceptualized as a theoretically diverse sample selected to illuminate how different institutional configurations mediate the textualization and enactment of Curriculum-Based Ideological and Moral Education (CIME). The sampling strategy combines the principles of maximum variation and theoretical sampling, prioritizing analytical diversity over statistical representativeness. By selecting institutions occupying distinct positions within the regional higher education system, the study captures a broad range of organizational contexts in which national policy is interpreted, recontextualized, and formalized.

This sampling strategy is consistent with Ball & Braun's (2012) conception of policy enactment as contingent upon local material, cultural, and organizational conditions. The three institutions therefore function as contrasting analytical settings through which to examine how institutional governance logics shape policy-as-text and policy-as-discourse, and how these logics influence the forms, emphases, and silences embedded within CIME-related documents. The purpose is not to evaluate institutional performance but to generate theoretical insight into the situated processes through which policy meanings are constructed across diverse organizational contexts.

The dataset comprises national policy directives, university-level CIME implementation schemes, curriculum templates, teaching syllabi, project notices, teaching supervision documents, and program-level materials produced between 2019 and 2025. These documents were obtained from official university websites, administrative offices, and authorized institutional sources. Document selection was guided by each document's relevance to institutional curriculum governance and its role in shaping, regulating, or formalizing CIME-related expectations.

The documents were analyzed not as isolated artifacts but as integral components of institutional governance systems. Their discursive positioning, organizational functions, and ideological purposes are treated as analytically significant because they reveal how universities legitimize, operationalize, and, in some cases, symbolically reference CIME within institutional policy and curriculum governance. In total, the corpus comprises 11 official documents published between 2019 and 2025, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of analyzed institutional documents (2019–2025).

University	No. of Documents	Types of Documents	Dominant Textualization Features
Institution A	4	Governance framework; center construction; syllabus template; teacher training notice	Strong institutionalization; explicit governance frameworks; formal CIME templates; structured professional development
Institution B	3	CIME implementation plan; curriculum standard template; classroom observation form	Evaluation-driven textualization; operational embedding of CIME in teaching standards and assessment
Xinhua College of Institution A	4	Course syllabi; CIME lecture notice; CIME training notice	Embedded textualization; mixed explicit/implicit elements; practice-oriented training-based enactment
Total	11	—	—

The analysis followed an interpretive, iterative, and reflexive approach to textual analysis informed by policy sociology. Guided by Ball’s theoretical framework, attention was directed toward how CIME is constructed as a policy text, how it functions as a discourse that shapes what becomes legitimate within curriculum governance, and how institutional documents reveal the situated processes of policy enactment. Analytical engagement involved repeated, close readings of the documents to identify recurring patterns, shifts in discursive emphasis, and institutional variation in the framing of CIME.

Coding was conducted inductively while remaining theoretically informed by Ball’s three complementary perspectives: policy-as-text, policy-as-discourse, and policy enactment. This approach ensured that each code could be conceptually linked to one or more dimensions of the analytical framework. The coding process captured definitional framings, ideological narratives, institutional expectations, curriculum governance mechanisms, and evaluative orientations. As the analysis progressed, the codes were iteratively refined, compared, and synthesized into broader themes representing the different ways in which each institution textualized CIME, including explicit normative codification, evaluation-driven operationalization, and implicit curriculum-embedded integration.

Reflexive memos were maintained throughout the analytical process to enhance transparency by documenting interpretive decisions, emerging insights, and tensions identified within the documents. Consequently, the themes presented in the findings represent a theoretically informed interpretation rather than the mechanical outcome of procedural coding. All documents were managed and coded using NVivo 14. The complete coding framework and the 33-page reflexive journal are available as supplementary material.

Trustworthiness was strengthened through prolonged engagement with the documentary corpus, iterative thematic refinement across multiple analytical cycles, and internal triangulation using different types of institutional documents. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the study by critically examining the researcher’s positionality and interpretive assumptions in light of the politically embedded nature of CIME. In addition, peer debriefing with two doctoral-level researchers enhanced analytical coherence and provided external critical feedback. Cross-checking publicly available documents against administrator-supplied PDF versions further supported the verification of document authenticity and helped identify potential omissions or evidence of self-censorship.

All analyzed documents were either publicly accessible or obtained with permission from institutional representatives. Non-public materials were provided with written informed consent for academic research purposes, and no personal identifiers were retained. The identification of participating institutions complies with ethical standards governing document-based policy research. All research materials were stored securely in accordance with institutional data management guidelines.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Understanding institutional policy translation requires recognizing that policy documents are not neutral administrative instruments but socially constructed texts that embody institutional priorities, governance cultures, and organizational interpretations. Policy research has consistently argued that educational policies acquire meaning through processes of interpretation, negotiation, and recontextualization rather than through straightforward implementation. From this perspective, policy texts both reflect and shape institutional practices by defining legitimate priorities, expectations, and modes of action (Ball, 1993, 2006; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Ball’s distinction between policy-as-text and policy-as-discourse highlights that institutional documents simultaneously communicate formal requirements and construct

discursive frameworks that influence how educational actors understand and enact policy. Complementing this perspective, the policy enactment framework explains how national reforms become operational through situated organizational processes conditioned by institutional histories, governance arrangements, available resources, and local cultures (Ball & Braun, 2012). Consequently, analyzing institutional documents provides an opportunity to understand not only what universities formally prescribe but also how they reinterpret national curriculum mandates within their own organizational contexts.

These theoretical perspectives are particularly relevant in the Chinese higher education system, where universities differ substantially in governance models, institutional missions, administrative capacities, and curriculum management practices. Comprehensive universities generally possess highly formalized governance structures and system-wide curriculum coordination mechanisms, whereas vocational undergraduate universities typically emphasize applied learning, competency-based curricula, and evaluation-oriented management. In contrast, private application-oriented colleges often operate through more flexible governance arrangements characterized by decentralized curriculum development and program-level innovation (Li et al., 2023; Mok & Han, 2017; Wen & Marginson, 2023). Such institutional diversity suggests that universities are unlikely to implement Curriculum-Based Ideological and Moral Education (CIME) uniformly. Instead, they are expected to develop distinct institutional responses that reflect their governance structures, organizational priorities, and educational missions.

Despite the rapid expansion of research on CIME, important gaps remain. First, previous studies have paid limited attention to the institutional textualization of this policy, focusing predominantly on national policy discourse or classroom implementation. Second, comparative analyses across different institutional types remain scarce despite clear differences in governance structures and organizational contexts. Third, the analytical potential of policy-as-text, policy-as-discourse, and policy enactment has rarely been applied systematically to institutional documents related to CIME. Finally, existing scholarship has not developed an analytical framework capable of explaining how different governance logics generate distinct forms of institutional textualization. These limitations restrict current understanding of how national curriculum reforms are translated into institutional governance and how universities mediate policy implementation at the meso level (Biesta et al., 2017; Mok & Han, 2017; Priestley et al., 2015).

To address these gaps, the present study examines the institutional textualization of CIME across three universities

in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region of northwestern China, representing three contrasting institutional contexts: a comprehensive university, a vocational undergraduate university, and a private application-oriented college. Using qualitative document analysis (Bowen, 2009), the study analyzes institutional policy documents, implementation plans, curriculum templates, course syllabi, teaching evaluation instruments, and professional development materials to examine how national policy is framed, codified, and operationalized within different organizational settings. Guided by Ball's perspectives on policy-as-text, policy-as-discourse, and policy enactment (Ball, 1993, 2006; Ball & Braun, 2012), the study develops a comparative understanding of institutional policy translation and proposes a typology of institutional textualization.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. How do institutional documents across the three universities articulate CIME through explicit and implicit policy expectations?

RQ2. What patterns of institutional policy translation emerge across universities exhibiting explicit normative, evaluation-oriented, and embedded forms of institutional textualization?

RQ3. How do these patterns reflect different governance logics, curriculum management approaches, and organizational contexts within Chinese higher education?

By examining how a common national curriculum mandate is interpreted and formalized across different institutional settings, this study contributes to the growing literature on policy enactment and higher education governance. More specifically, it advances understanding of the meso level of educational policy by demonstrating how institutional governance mediates the translation of national reforms into curriculum structures, organizational practices, and policy texts. In doing so, the study provides a theoretically informed framework for analyzing institutional textualization that may also prove valuable for investigating value-oriented curriculum reforms in other higher education contexts.

Institution B: Evaluation-Oriented and Operational Textualization in a Vocational Undergraduate Institution

Institution B, which was officially upgraded to bachelor's-level status in June 2025, demonstrates a markedly evaluation-oriented pattern of textualization. Compared with Institution A's system-level codification, Institution B embeds CIME into operational and performance-oriented governance tools, such as curriculum standards, teaching templates, and evaluation rubrics. This reflects a governance culture common in vocational institutions, where

practical relevance, skills application, and measurable outcomes are key curricular priorities (Li et al., 2023).

The institution's CIME implementation plan outlines principles related to course management, teaching processes, and quality assurance mechanisms. The plan emphasizes program relevance and applied learning, reflecting an approach aligned with the institution's emphasis on technical competence and professional readiness. This alignment indicates that CIME is interpreted through a practice-based reform lens consistent with the applied orientation of vocational education (Wen & Marginson, 2023).

Curriculum standards and teaching templates

Institution B's curriculum standards explicitly require instructors to incorporate moral and civic elements into their instructional design. These standards include dedicated sections for CIME integration and provide guidance on teaching approaches, classroom activities, and assessment methods. The presence of standardized templates and structured indicators reflects an evaluation-oriented strategy for institutionalizing CIME.

CIME-related criteria are integrated into classroom observation protocols and faculty performance evaluation instruments. Instructors are assessed on their ability to incorporate value-oriented elements into their teaching, and these criteria contribute to overall teaching performance evaluations. Compared with Institution A, the emphasis is more operational, focusing on the completion of observable instructional practices rather than on broad systemic alignment. This operational orientation reflects an evaluation culture in which curriculum implementation is monitored through measurable performance indicators (Lingard et al., 2013).

Professional development activities at Institution B emphasize practical instructional strategies and case-based training. These initiatives promote action-oriented learning and classroom practice by encouraging instructors to identify moral dimensions within disciplinary content and apply appropriate pedagogical strategies. This emphasis reflects the institution's applied educational mission and its preference for concrete, practice-based approaches to instructional improvement (Avalos, 2011; Monroy-Peñafiel et al., 2026).

Overall, Institution B exhibits an evaluation-oriented mode of textualization in which CIME is embedded within curriculum templates, observable instructional practices, and faculty evaluation systems. This approach reflects Ball & Braun's (2012) conception of policy enactment as the situated "doing" of policy through operational routines and evaluative practices. It illustrates how vocational institutions translate national CIME directives into

performance-oriented forms of recontextualization aligned with the practical demands of applied education.

Institution C, a private application-oriented institution, demonstrates an embedded and practice-oriented pattern of CIME textualization. Unlike Institutions A and B, which have developed dedicated CIME implementation plans and standardized evaluation instruments, Institution C incorporates CIME primarily through course-level documents, curriculum design requirements, and routine instructional development activities. This pattern reflects governance characteristics commonly associated with private institutions, where curriculum practices are shaped by flexible organizational structures, program-level coordination, and applied educational missions (Wen & Marginson, 2023).

Institution C integrates CIME into its overall curricular vision by emphasizing application-oriented, practice-based, and industry-relevant instruction. Although the institution has not issued stand-alone CIME policy documents, its curriculum materials demonstrate a clear commitment to aligning instruction with national value-oriented educational goals. This embedded approach is consistent with research suggesting that private colleges frequently incorporate national policy directives into existing program structures rather than producing separate institutional policy documents (Mok & Han, 2017).

English course syllabi include clearly defined value-oriented learning objectives and recommend instructional strategies that integrate cultural, ethical, and situational dimensions. These documents adopt a flexible structure that allows instructors considerable autonomy to interpret CIME requirements according to disciplinary content and classroom contexts. Compared with the highly structured templates used by Institution A and the task-oriented designs adopted by Institution B, Institution C provides greater interpretive flexibility for instructors (Wen & Marginson, 2023).

Institution C also emphasizes instructional development through workshops, public lectures, and faculty seminars focused on CIME integration. Training materials indicate sustained efforts to strengthen instructors' understanding of value-oriented educational objectives while promoting practical strategies for classroom implementation. These initiatives reflect an institutional preference for activity-based rather than policy-driven approaches to reform implementation (Avalos, 2011).

Routine administrative communications further encourage instructors to integrate value-oriented elements into course design, classroom activities, and assessment

practices. Together, these initiatives demonstrate that CIME is embedded within routine instructional processes despite the absence of stand-alone institutional policy documents.

Overall, Institution C demonstrates an embedded and practice-oriented pattern of textualization. Rather than relying on dedicated policy texts, CIME is incorporated primarily through course syllabi, instructional development activities, and routine administrative communications. This embedded approach resonates with Ball's notion of policy-as-discourse, whereby reform ideas circulate through everyday academic practices rather than through formal policy codification. It illustrates a flexible mode of policy translation in which national reform expectations are adapted to program-level contexts.

The three institutions exhibit distinct patterns of CIME textualization shaped by their governance structures, institutional missions, and curriculum management logics. Although all three institutions incorporate CIME into curriculum documents, instructional practices, and professional development activities, they differ substantially in the degree of explicitness, standardization, and flexibility reflected in their institutional texts. These differences support Ball's (1993, 2006) argument that policy texts are not neutral transmissions of central policy intentions but are instead situated artifacts shaped by organizational histories, available resources, and interpretive practices.

Institution A demonstrates the highest level of textual explicitness through a stand-alone CIME implementation plan, standardized curriculum templates, and formalized quality assurance mechanisms. Institution B likewise maintains an institutional CIME implementation framework; however, its supporting documents adopt a more operational and performance-oriented focus, emphasizing task completion, observable instructional practices, and evaluation-driven processes. Institution C, by contrast, embeds CIME primarily within course syllabi, faculty workshops, and routine administrative communications rather than through separate policy documents, resulting in a flexible, practice-oriented mode of policy translation. These distinctions illustrate how institutions differ in the extent to which they codify—or deliberately choose not to codify—national policy intentions into formal institutional texts.

Differences in curriculum management further illustrate distinct processes of policy recontextualization. Institution A's indicator-based templates promote consistency and minimize interpretive variation, whereas Institution B aligns curriculum templates with applied, vocationally oriented pedagogies. Institution C adopts more flexible syllabi that provide instructors with greater discretion to integrate value-oriented elements into disciplinary content. These differences demonstrate how national reform expectations are translated into curriculum-level guidance in ways that reflect institutional priorities and organizational routines.

Teaching evaluation systems reveal an additional dimension of institutional variation. Institution A incorporates CIME-related criteria into formal classroom observation and evaluation processes, whereas Institution B emphasizes operational indicators directly linked to instructional performance. Institution C does not employ dedicated CIME evaluation instruments but instead integrates value-oriented expectations into broader teaching review procedures. These findings demonstrate how institutions enact policy differently through their evaluative infrastructures, consistent with Ball and Braun's (2012) conception of policy enactment as situated practice.

Professional development strategies also differ across institutions. Institution A provides structured, system-wide training programs; Institution B integrates professional development into routine administrative and instructional processes; and Institution C relies primarily on workshops, public lectures, and activity-based initiatives. These differences create distinct policy enactment environments that shape how instructors interpret and implement CIME in their everyday teaching.

Taken together, the three institutions represent distinct governance orientations. Institution A reflects a highly codified, system-level approach to policy implementation; Institution B emphasizes operationalization within an evaluation-driven governance culture; and Institution C demonstrates a flexible model grounded in practice-based curricular integration. Viewed along a continuum of governance and institutional formality, these cases illustrate how a single national policy can be recontextualized into institution-specific policy texts through varying degrees of textual explicitness, discursive framing, and situated enactment. Collectively, these findings underscore the importance of examining CIME not only as a national policy mandate but also as a multilayered process of institutional policy translation that generates diverse organizational configurations and shapes the policy environments within which instructors work (Table 2).

Table 2: Three institutional textualization modes of CIME. Based on Ball's (1993, 2006) framework

Institution	Institution A (Comprehensive University)	Institution B (Vocational Undergraduate University)	Institution C (Private Application-Oriented College)
Textualization Mode	High codification	High operationalization	High flexibility
Key Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand-alone policy plans • Standardized templates • CIME indicators codified • Formal QA mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation-driven tasks • Performance indicators • Task templates & rubrics • Observable requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedded syllabus integration • Practice-based embedding • Informal guidance • Teaching workshops
Theoretical Alignment	Policy-as-text (formal codification)	Policy enactment (operational practices)	Policy-as-discourse (practice circulation)

The findings demonstrate that the three participating institutions translate national Curriculum-Based Ideological and Moral Education (CIME) directives into distinct patterns of institutional textualization shaped by their governance structures, curriculum management approaches, and organizational priorities. Interpreted through Ball's conceptualizations of policy-as-text and policy-as-discourse (Ball, 1993, 2006), together with Ball and Braun (2012) policy enactment framework, the findings confirm that educational policy is not implemented uniformly but is continually interpreted, negotiated, and recontextualized within institutional settings. Across the three cases, institutional documents selectively frame, codify, and operationalize national policy expectations, producing differentiated modes of textualization that reflect the organizational identities and governance logics of each university.

The highly codified pattern of textualization identified in Institution A illustrates how comprehensive universities employ established governance structures to formalize national policy through institution-wide implementation frameworks, standardized curriculum templates, and comprehensive evaluation mechanisms. These institutional documents reduce interpretive ambiguity by establishing explicit expectations for academic units and teaching staff, exemplifying Ball's concept of policy-as-text as a mechanism through which policy is stabilized and institutionalized. In contrast, Institution B demonstrates a predominantly operational mode of textualization, embedding CIME within curriculum standards, teaching templates, classroom observation instruments, and performance indicators. This approach reflects the policy enactment perspective, whereby implementation is closely linked to observable practices, accountability mechanisms, and evaluation-oriented governance. Institution C, meanwhile, adopts a more embedded and practice-oriented approach, integrating CIME into course syllabi, professional development activities, and routine administrative communications rather than through stand-alone policy documents. This pattern reflects Ball's concept of policy-as-discourse, in which policy meanings circulate through everyday academic practices and local institutional interactions rather than through highly codified governance frameworks.

These contrasting modes of institutional textualization demonstrate that governance structures play a decisive role in shaping how national curriculum reforms are translated into institutional policy environments. Comprehensive universities tend to prioritize coherence, standardization, and system-wide coordination; vocational undergraduate universities emphasize operational clarity and evaluation-driven implementation; whereas private application-oriented colleges favor flexible, context-sensitive approaches that allow greater adaptation at the program level. These findings are consistent with previous research on differentiated governance in Chinese higher education, which shows that universities interpret national reforms according to their organizational capacities, institutional missions, and administrative traditions. More importantly, the comparison demonstrates that institutional diversity influences not only the pace of policy implementation but also the forms through which national reforms are interpreted, formalized, and enacted.

The analysis also provides valuable insights into the institutional conditions that shape teachers' professional agency. Although classroom practices were beyond the scope of this study, the institutional documents reveal how different policy environments configure the interpretive space available to academic staff. Highly codified governance systems may strengthen policy consistency and organizational coherence while simultaneously reducing teachers' discretionary capacity. Evaluation-oriented systems reinforce accountability through measurable indicators and observable practices, potentially encouraging compliance with institutional expectations. By contrast, embedded and practice-oriented approaches provide greater flexibility for contextual interpretation but may offer less explicit guidance for implementation. These observations support ecological perspectives on teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015), suggesting that teachers' capacity to interpret and enact CIME is closely shaped by the institutional environments in which they work. Consequently, institutional textualization should be understood not merely as an administrative process but also as a key mechanism influencing teachers' opportunities for professional interpretation and curriculum decision-making.

Beyond its empirical contribution, this study advances the literature by bringing the meso level of educational policy to the forefront of CIME research. Whereas previous studies have focused primarily on national policy discourse or classroom implementation, the present analysis demonstrates that institutional documents constitute critical sites where national reforms acquire operational meaning. The three modes of institutional textualization identified in this study—explicit codification, evaluation-oriented operationalization, and embedded practice-based integration—provide a theoretically grounded framework for understanding how universities translate common policy directives into institution-specific governance arrangements. This typology extends theoretical discussions of policy translation, policy enactment, and institutional recontextualization while offering an analytical framework that may be applied to investigate value-oriented curriculum reforms across diverse higher education systems beyond the Chinese context.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings also have important implications for institutional policy design and curriculum governance. Rather than promoting a single model of implementation, the results suggest that the effective enactment of Curriculum-Based Ideological and Moral Education (CIME) depends on achieving an appropriate balance among policy clarity, operational guidance, and pedagogical flexibility. Institutional governance frameworks should therefore align curriculum templates, teaching evaluation mechanisms, and professional development initiatives to create coherent policy environments while preserving sufficient space for disciplinary interpretation and contextual adaptation. Such alignment may strengthen policy consistency across academic units and facilitate the meaningful integration of value-oriented curriculum reform into everyday teaching practice.

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting these findings. As a document-based study, the analysis captures how institutions formally construct and communicate policy expectations but cannot fully explain how these expectations are interpreted, negotiated, or enacted by instructors in classroom practice. Future research would benefit from combining document analysis with interviews, classroom observations, and longitudinal research designs to examine how institutional textualization influences instructors' professional decision-making over time. Expanding the analysis to universities located in other regions of China and representing a broader range of institutional types would also provide a more comprehensive understanding of the diversity of policy enactment across the higher education system. Despite these limitations, the study offers a theoretically grounded

and empirically robust account of how national curriculum reforms are translated into institutional governance. By illuminating the mechanisms through which universities recontextualize policy within their organizational settings, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of curriculum governance, institutional policy enactment, and value-oriented educational reform in Chinese higher education.

REFERENCES

- Avalos, B. (2011). Teacher professional development in *Teaching and Teacher Education* over ten years. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(1), 10–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.08.007>
- Ball, S. J. (1993). What is policy? Texts, trajectories and toolboxes. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 13(2), 10–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0159630930130203>
- Ball, S. J. (2006). *Education policy and social class: The selected works of Stephen Ball*. Routledge.
- Ball, S. J., & Braun, A. (2012). *How schools do policy: Policy enactments in secondary schools*. Routledge.
- Biesta, G., Priestley, M., & Robinson, S. (2017). Talking about education: Exploring the significance of teachers' talk for teacher agency. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 49(1), 38–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2016.1205143>
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- He, X., Chen, P., Wu, J., & Dong, Z. (2021). Deep learning-based teaching strategies of ideological and political courses under the background of educational psychology. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, Article 731166. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.731166>
- Ho, W.-C. (2025). Political ideologies and moral education in contemporary China's music curriculum. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 26(32). <http://doi.org/10.26209/ijea26n32>
- Kennedy, A. (2014). Understanding continuing professional development: The need for theory to impact on policy and practice. *Professional Development in Education*, 40(5), 688–697. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2014.955122>
- Li, Z., Zheng, J., & Xiong, J. (2023). Examining project-based governance of higher vocational education in China: A case study. *Higher Education Policy*, 36(2), 250–269. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41307-021-00251-z>
- Lingard, B., Martino, W., & Rezai-Rashti, G. (2013). Testing regimes, accountabilities and education policy. *Journal of Education Policy*, 28(5), 539–556. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2013.820042>
- Liu, J. (2025). Quality assurance in Chinese higher education: Policy reforms and institutional challenges. *The Development of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(3), 144–161. <https://doi.org/10.71204/bngj5358>

- Liu, X., Zhao, X., & Starkey, H. (2021). Ideological and political education in Chinese universities: Structures and practices. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 43(4), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2021.1960484>
- Marginson, S. (2016). *The dream is over: The crisis of Clark Kerr's California idea of higher education*. University of California Press.
- Mei, Z. (2024). Integrating curriculum ideology and politics into university English teaching: Practices and challenges. *Frontiers in Education*, 9, Article 1389469. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2024.1389469>
- Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2020). *Guidelines for the construction of curriculum-based ideological and political education in higher education institutions (MOE [2020] No. 3)*. http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A08/s7056/202006/t20200603_462437.html
- Mok, K. H., & Han, X. (2017). Higher education governance and policy in China: Managing decentralization and transnationalism. *Policy and Society*, 36(1), 34–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14494035.2017.1288964>
- Monroy-Peñañiel, J. C., Estrada-Girón, A., & Moreno-Tapia, J. (2026). La relación entre docentes y estudiantes en la formación universitaria: experiencias, significados y prácticas de acompañamiento. *Sophia Research Review*, 3(2), 56-65. <https://doi.org/10.64092/09x24e73>
- Priestley, M., Biesta, G., & Robinson, S. (2015). *Teacher agency: An ecological approach*. Bloomsbury.
- Rizvi, F., & Lingard, B. (2010). *Globalizing education policy*. Routledge.
- Wen, W., & Marginson, S. (2023). Governance in Chinese universities. In K. Sahlin & U. Eriksson-Zetterquist (Eds.), *University collegiality and the erosion of faculty authority*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36466-1_10