The Potential Effects Neoliberal Ideology brought to the Student Engagement in Ideological and Political Theories Curriculum (IPTC) China-based Higher Education

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ABSTRACT: The student engagement of Ideological and Political Theories Curriculum (IPTC) is a contemporary China-based research 'hot topic' in higher education, which is effected by a movement of Neoliberal Ideology (NI). This paper seeks to investigate the relationship between NI and the student engagement of IPTC and then highlights the potential effects of NI brought to IPTC. Within the context of China's education organizations, the paper stated the current understanding on IPTC from college students' perspective with phenomenography interview. Furthermore, the potential effects of NI on student engagement, which included the decline of cognitive engagement decline, behavior engagement and affection engagement were illustrated in detail in the result and discussion section. Finally, the paper ends with the reflection of China's higher education and suggestions for IPTC teaching in the future.

Keywords: Potential effects, Neoliberal Ideology(NI), Student engagement, Ideological and Political Theories Curriculum (IPTC), China-based, higher education

I. INTRODUCTION

In the recent years, Neoliberal Ideology (NI) has made its position clear as the strongest power for contemporary higher education policy, which is driven by economic imperatives to develop global, entrepreneurial, corporate, commercialized universities, and as having the best resources for doing so (Morley, Marginson & Blackmore, 2014) though it has shown in other fields (e.g. Lamuedra, O' Donnell, 2012; Adhikary, 2012; Bay-Cheng, 2015; Lee & Lee, 2013). Saunders (2010) characterizes Neoliberal Ideology as 'commodification, commercialization, and marketization, as well as the extension of market logic and the prioritization of economic outcomes' (Saunders, 2010). Currently, a Green Paper for consultation entitled 'Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice' was published by the United Kingdom Government Department for Business and Skills, igniting controversy about its potential effects on the English higher education sector. We acknowledge that UK's initiative, it still need to reflect a broader move in higher education in the world. For example, neoliberal imperatives may lead to the marketization of higher education for other country with 'league tables, branding, and competition for students framing'.

China's higher education, as an important part in the world, was not avoided by the movement. It is also having an influence on a key educational course delivered in Chinese higher education, entitled 'Ideological and Political Theories Curriculum (IPTC), which has the task of educating students in moral and ethical values for living in the modern world (Wang &Fan, 2016). We have to acknowledge that IPTC was impacted by the movement. At the same time, criticisms of ineffectiveness on IPTC had been flourishing in the literature during past 5 years in China (see e.g. Wang, 2013; Shu, Xv & Qv; 2015, Xu, 2013). The action and reaction of researchers to these criticisms can be traced many years ago and content of policy documents and strategic papers published after 2010 (see e.g. Zheng, 2013; Zhang, 2011).

The aim of this article is to examine the potential effects of this phenomenon brought to IPTC. It argues that although the lecturers and researchers has paid lots of attentions to the effectiveness of IPTC, the actual practice teaching outcomes gives a different effect by the students that was not good as teacher imaged. Through an interpretive textual analysis of the student engagement of IPTC, the article establishes the point that the fundamental world view that the recent research is still undated, and that the students are still strongly feeling to a market-driven when they are learning. At the teachers points, there is a move towards more engagement of IPTC through changing methods, design and technology, but at from the students perspective, their cognitive, behavior and affection are market driven, highly economy centered and competition based. Research has been used to show a greater concern on the method of IPTC, mostly teaching in the classroom. However, research did not investigate more the effects of NI may brought to student engagement in China.

In keeping with the above-mentioned condition, the article has been divided into four parts. The first part discusses literature review of IPTC and core concept. The part that follows looks into methodology that used in

this article. The section after that identifies our results and discussion which mentions the examples from our viewers. Through an interpretive textual analysis of our findings, the concluding section tries to establish the point that the potential effects of NI brought to the student engagement of IPTC.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Neoliberal Ideology

There is no one could exactly come up with the definition of Neoliberal Ideology, and so does this article. Authors, however, described the understanding of Neoliberal Ideology are occurring throughout social, political, economic and cultural spaces across the globe (Harvey, 2005). As Murray and Guta (2014) stated, 'current epoch is marked by neoliberal free-market ideology that has conceptualized life through economic terms and rendered it rational, calculable, competitive, and evidence based' (Murray & Guta, 2014). Livingston (2011) discussed the Neoliberal Ideology and the myth of the American dream (Livingston, 2011). In fact, the neoliberal hegemony increasingly shaped 'individual's common sense, commodification, commercialization, and marketization as well as the extension of market logic and the prioritization of economic outcomes' have come to redefine the purpose and role of social, cultural, and political institutions' (Saunders, 2015).

Student engagement

There is a big amount of professional and popular interest in the student engagement on higher education (Junco, 2012; Tolley et al, 2012; Currey et al, 2014). Study determined that the influence of technology on student engagement and examines the relationships between student engagement and technology use in class (Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015). Research has investigated how and to what extent students' intrinsic motivation and task engagement were affected by manipulating autonomy (Mozgalina, 2015). What's more, Davey (2015) revealed a detailed anatomy of students' self-perceived engagement with material in a lecture and their learning of a key course threshold concept (Davey, 2015). Research also investigated whether perceived interpersonal teacher behavior and teacher beliefs concerning motives for being a teacher, attitudes toward teacher knowledge domains and self-efficacy for teaching are related to self-reported student engagement (Uden et al, 2014).

Furthermore, more research positive the function of student engagement. In a study by Kaciuba (2012), student engagement can improve accounting class, including the auditing class (Kaciuba, 2012). And also, the impact of wiki-based activities on student participation and collaborative learning in a large postgraduate international management course was found in studies of Salaber (Salaber, 2014). According to Imlawi, Gregg and Karimi (2015), the impact of instructors' self-disclosure and use of humor via course-based social networks as well as their credibility, and the moderating impact of time spent in these course-based social networks were tested in the student 'engagement in course-based social networks(Imlawi, Gregg & Karimi, 2015) . Study also compared clicker technology against mobile polling and the Just-in-Time Teaching strategy which have generally investigate how these methods may differently affect students' anxiety, self-efficacy, engagement, academic performance, and attention and relaxation as indicated by brainwave activity (Sun, 2014). Research have identified the one-shot library instruction to influence of the student engagement (Walker & Pearce, 2014).

A big mount of research has examined the other aspect of student engagement. For example, research examined the relationship between instructor scaffolding for interaction and students' academic engagement in an online learning environment mediated by perceived class goal structures (Choa &Chob, 2013). Still, teachers' judgments of student characteristics are affected not only by the characteristic in question, but also by other factors (Kaisera, Retelsdorfb, Südkampc & Möllera, 2013). Research discussed graduate student learning experience as part of an international nursing collaborative working together to develop an academic partnership for global health Education in the circumpolar north (Watt, Butler, Exner-Pirot & Wright, 2015). The effects of external rewards on fifth graders 'motivation, engagement and learning while playing an educational game (Filseckera & Hickeyb, 2014).

There is still suggestions from other research that Clicker Assessment and Feedback (CAF)that was adopted by several thousand colleges and universities across Europe and North Americas strategy is most effective for student engagement and learning if it is supported by appropriate CAF development of professors and their subsequent formative use of CAF during teaching (Hana & Finkelsteinb, 2013). And also, some article present findings from a study which evaluated the effectiveness of a virtual community on student engagement and academic performance (Giddens, Hrabe, Carlson-Sabelli, fogg & North, 2012).

We also found student engagement systematically research, e.g. compared and animations actually improve learning in terms of some educational aspects: short-term and long-term knowledge acquisition, and drop-out rates (Urquiza-Fuentes & Velázquez-Iturbide, 2013); personal factors and students' choice to participate in these contemporary methods (Pellasa & Kazanidisb,2014); the use of personal pronouns (we, you) in lecture introductions in the arts and science disciplines, a disciplinary difference in the use of personal pronouns for student engagement in lecture introductions (Yeo & Ting, 2013).

In fact, some researchers take a different approach and develop a framework that models classroom engagement as a function of students' conceptual competence in the specific content (e.g., the mathematics of motion) of an activity (Azevedo et al., 2012). Research was tried to be investigated, measured and finally verified the effects of computer self-efficacy, metacognitive self-regulation and self-esteem that can predict the students' engagement as an overall multidimensional construct of factors (cognitive, emotional and behavioral)(Pellas, 2014)

Student engagement of IPTC in China

As the IPTC was an important and compulsory courses in China, many scholars have written about effectiveness of IPTC. For example, study says that classroom teaching is the 'main-channel' and the most effective approach for IPTC teaching to college students (Wang, 2013). Researchers have examined the technology and teaching methods (e.g., micro-courses, assessment and strategies) and their impact on the effectiveness of IPTC (Li, 2014; She, 2012; Ai, 2014). These studies also suggest that enhancing technologies and teaching techniques could improve the effectiveness of IPTC. Other researchers have noted the role that a strong policy approach plays in intrinsic motivation, which indicates that more flexible policy approaches results in better student engagement. Our question is whether enhancing classroom teaching could result in the efficient and effective engagement of IPTC.

Still, researcher stated their ideas for the ineffectiveness of IPTC Teaching. A number of researchers have examined differences between student engagement and learning interests. He and Chen (2008) found that better engagement could improve students' level of interest in what is being learned (He & Chen, 2008). Several researchers have examined the relationship between the effect of student engagement on academic disciplines and learning outcomes. Shu, Xu and Qu (2015) asserted that students' interest in academic disciplines was significantly related to levels based on the data collected from 3,500 senior students who participated in 2014 Student Survey of Higher Learning conducted at Sun Yat-Sen University(Shu, Xu & Qu, 2015). Therefore, one challenge is that teachers who teach IPTC face the problem that involves the implementation of strategies designed to foster student engagement, thereby optimizing the effectiveness of IPTC.

Based on the discussion above, the article's authors have a hypothesis that current study did not notice the influence from Neoliberal Ideologies and its negative impact on student engagement of IPTCT. The purpose of the present research is to show the basic impact of NI on student engagement with IPTC in China-based higher education, and approaches that may provide solutions from students' perspective.

III. METHOD

In this paper, we applied phenomenographic research methodology in the context of research in IPTC, which is 'a research method adapted for mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualize, perceive, and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in the world around them' (Monton, 1986). Exactly, phenomenographic interview usually begins with interviewee who respond to a planned question or a given situation. We followed this kind of interview.

Subjects

Twenty-eight third year college undergraduates at Northwestern Polytechnical University participated in the experiment as part of their course requirements. As the experiment was carried out at the last term as the subjects had learnt all IPTC units. In order to maximize the variation in ways of seeing research, we tried to ensure that the interviewees included both female and male, of the 29 subjects, specifically, 19 were males and 9 females. We kept our purpose in mind at all stages of the research and some strategic approaches were advocated.

Procedure

Before interview, the following instructions were given to each interviewee. For example, a few words about the aim, organizing, outcome were clearly explained for subjects, which make the whole interview explicit and dispel their worries so that they could express their real consideration.

The phenomenographer was individually organizing the interview. For the most important part of the interview was the interview's contents. Bowden (2005) maintains that questions would be of various kinds: (1) Neutral questions aimed at getting the interviewee to say more. (2)Specific questions that ask for more information about issues raised by the interviewee earlier in the interview. (3) Specific questions that invite reflection by the interviewee about things they have said. Here, phenomenographic interviews were conducted that began with interviewees being asked to respond to planned questions. Interviewee participated in the experiment as part of their course requirements. Meanwhile, we are intending to adapt those question which focus the interview are open-ended (Bowden, 2005). If doing so, we would like to give more chooses for the interviewee that they could concentrate on the important they care about. Finally, the main questions guiding the research are as follows:

- Q1: How does a worldly Neoliberal Ideology bring to the IPTC?
- Q2: What challenges are involved for students and teachers when teaching and learning on IPTC?
- Q3: In what way and to what extent do Neoliberal Ideology effect the learning of IPTC?

After interviews, the experimenter will give more reminds to the subjects of adding their new idea or individual ideas for the research.

Analysis data

Interviewing has been the mainly method of phenomenographic data collection. But, how did we analysis this data. All transcripts that related to given questions have to be read again. It is possible to find the real problems from these transcripts with re-read. We will provide the details of the interviews. What's more, in our analysis, we kept in mind to analysis transcripts from students' perspective.

Interpretation

We explained the context of the study and its application in IPTC. And also, we aim to find new ideas from the interviewees' talks. From this point, we are not only show the potential effects from these interviewing, but look for the potential reason from this phenomenon.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Potential effects undergraduates mentioned

Several key findings from the analyses we performed included:

Table 1 Overview of potential effects Neoliberal Ideology brought to student engagement of IPTC

Reasons	Examples	Engagement
Benefit to scholarship	It is nothing useful to my scholarship; the nearly same score	Cognitive engagement
application at universities	in classmates, no one did not pass the exam; no different than others.	
Good companies in market	I did not find good salary companies even if I success in IPTC.	
Economic benefits in society	I cannot earn more money if it was my major.	
Useful in practice	I will not use them in my career in the future.	Affection engagement
Useful in theory	I need not innovate on this courses in theory.	
Good positions	It is not closed relation with my job.	Behavior engagement
No interest	I feel a little bit boring for the learning of IPTC.	

Relating these relationships between them, we expected: benefit to scholarship at universities, good companies in markets and economic benefit in society would be the typical reasons with cognitive engagement; useful in practice and useful in theory would be the typical reasons with affection engagement; good positions and no interest would be related to the behavior engagement.

Interviewing examples

Please remind that 'R' here for researcher; 'S' for student; '1, 2, 3, 4...' represent different subjects.

R: What does IPTC mean to you and what extent did you think of student engagement of IPTC?

- S (1): Well, IPTC was a kind of courses in my higher education and which is demanded by the university? I have to lean it as it relate to my score, my scholarship and future career. I did not think student more engage in IPTC as they are more compulsory for us.
- R: You also mentioned IPTC as being a compulsory course in real education system. Can you say what you mean its real effectiveness?
- S (2): I do not think it has effective influence to guide my concept, my understanding about many problems in life. But actually the courses are more boring, more ineffective in many aspects.
- R: I'd like now to discuss the things you did in your learning processing, and why did you believe student have less engage in this sort of course.
- S (3): [Pause], we cannot concentrate on these. One reason is useless personally. Another reason is there is no big difference between us only if I paid lots of time on it.
- R: You said earlier that you also saw its infectiveness of IPTC? Why have you adopted this behavior?
- S (4): If I did not attend this lecture, I will be in trouble because, you know, sometimes lectures will give me assessment.
- R: ...once again you've raised many things that you would like to pursue. The first I suppose, is to pick up on you understand. That means I should ask you one question that why you unlike to learn this course in depth?
- S (5): It depends. I feel it is easy for me to pass. And also, it cannot show the typical difference with other courses on the other hand. In fact, I did not spend more time on them but I passed them with good score.

R: So, how did you actually regards to IPTC?

S (6): [Pause] I actually think it was an easy and simple course that I need not spent on my time and energy more for course compare to other subject. If so, I would like to spend more time on my other course instead.

R: Was there movement like neoliberal ideology for IPTC? You say that you were able to see the connection between IPTC and economics, politics, and other aspects.....The question is what connection it was? Why were you able to do that? What did you do actually?

S (7): ...personality, it is difficult for me to say which movement effect the engagement of IPTC. I am intending to think the globalization brings all kind of changing in our society which includes education reform as well. When it comes to the connection, I would like to say IPTC could not bring benefit to me. The reasons that I did just only I choose it and I have to learn. In all my course of undergraduate period, I could finish the courses, which means there need not too high or too low. Just to be an ordinary.

R: Did you ever start thinking about something that effects student engagement. Something affects the low engagement? Something that quite happened to occur to you?

S (8): Well, this is a little bit difficult. In many aspect, the engagement of these course was affected by in whole society's conception, which made them a low engagement or high engagement, I am not exactly sure. In my opinion, it was obvious from our experience that lecturers said a lot less on the meaning of teaching and learning. I suppose that part of the reason was that we felt they had shown the courses teaching in response to why we had to learn. In fact, I did not feel the urgency why I should learn.

R: What do you think of the changing that lectures and / or university should do for the engagement?

S (9): I did not think there will have some changing for the IPTC in the future. But I do think there should some changing for enhancing the student engagement, especially in the policy aspects.

R: Do you have a feeling that you behave in a different way when you lean other related course?

S (10): Sure, it is completely different from my major course. The most case, I have to behave in a large energy, passion. I am interesting in my major courses because they are closed to my future career. Unfortunately, IPTC was different, I think I am able to finish it and there was no barrier to understand.

R:do you have any impression of how you improve it when you learn. In other words, what changing do you want to?

S (11): I will change my concept and would like to spend more time on IPTC. But, I do not think I will have lots of time.

R: Do you have a feeling that you behave differently when you are learning or when you are learning in group? S (12): As I said earlier, I did not think it is usefully compared with my other course. So, I was not feeling there was a different in a group or I was learning by myself. What's more, I will not learn in depth even though I would like to engage more.

R: You say that you need more time on this topic?

S (13): Yes, I found it is fun for the development of Chinese contemporary history and I would like to learn from the lecture which is different from the materials online. If it is fun and interesting, I would like to engage. And also I will concentrate on this interesting topic in my space time.

R: So, you mean that you consciously connect up what you have learned earlier in life?

S (14): Yes, exactly, when I was child, my parents and my teachers told me some content which was the same with the content of IPTC I have learnt later at university. So, I will think it is important in a long time.

Student engagement of IPTC declined

From our interviewing for these college students, we have to acknowledge the Neoliberal Ideology (NI) has a large influences on student engagement of IPTC though they were not aware the term of NI, which effects the total effectiveness of student engagement of IPTC in reality.

Firstly, students' cognitive engagement of IPTC has declined with market-centered thinking. From our interview, we know that IPTC is becoming infective. The most important reason was most students thought IPTC could not bring more benefit for them. They did not notice the invisible benefits for their life in the long term while merely concentrated on the short benefits such as scholarship application, good scores and good assessment. In their minds, they make the IPTC ordinary regular and the regular ordinary. They learn just because they have to. Their learning was not based on the motivation or/and interesting in nature. They became passively to accept the concept, content, even method of IPTC. It cannot deny to say that more and more student only confined the learning of IPTC with a sort of knowledge courses rather than a useful guiding and leading course for their life. So, their cognitive engagement were less and less at a large content.

Secondly, students' affection engagement of IPTC has declined with utility-oriented thinking. Most students did not paid lots of attention on IPTC as they did not like it. They did not show the motivation and interesting on it. This kind of understanding came from the thinking of utility, which means, they thought, it is not useful in their career options and major-related promotion. Thus, IPTC was becoming a compulsory course in system and less function for students. In their daily life, they did not see the bright and beautiful meaning from them. If they

hold this kind of opinion on the learning process, they will not spend their energy, enthusiasm, passion, and positive on them.

Finally, students' behavioral engagement of IPTC has declined with 'Lack of commercial benefit'. We are not denying that IPTC could not bring more commercial benefit for undergraduates. But we are sure they will have benefit from them in the future or their future career and life. There was a big problem that more and more students only see the commercial benefit in their learning, including what is related to their scholarship, what factors could appeal the employers and what increase their practice experience. Ultimately, they spend less time on the program and lectures, let alone deep reflection the improvement of IPTC in their education. Attending to the ordinary lectures, finishing the housework and passing the exams are the typical behavior of IPTC, which contribute the decline of the whole educational effect.

Thus, we suggest that more responsibilities and engagement is needed for IPTC delivery in the face of Neoliberal Ideology's increasing influence. The potential effects of student engagement described in this paper complements other statement identified by the authors. It will be important to consider what future influence neoliberal ideology may have in relation to its impact in the effectiveness of IPTC that we have identified. In the educational context based-China, it will become more and more difficult and complex to engage student on IPTC learning. And still, there was a big challenge for lecturers or researchers to the study of engagement student of IPTC. Because we would not affect or change the influence from the NI under globalization and web environment.

V. CONCLUSION

With talk and awareness of potential effects that Neoliberal Ideology brought on cognitive engagement of IPTC affection engagement of IPTC and behavioral engagement of IPTC, the student engagement of IPTC in total will always be changing in China-based higher education. Research for the Neoliberal Ideology and its impact on the Ideological and Political Theories Curriculums should gradually regain their places in currently Chinese higher educational reform, as researchers, academics and government all strive to bring effectiveness of student engagement in IPTC programming into the forefront of universities development.

Given the demands of Chinese higher educational system, in most cases lecturer are under pressure to comply with the teaching of IPTC as the main concern in order to guarantee governor's ideology leadership. As we have seen, the potential effects of NI dictates what areas we should do in the future. It is only when people have a clear sense of what is at stake and what the expectations are in terms of action that positive changes will be observed.

In conclusion, though it becomes the work of lecturers who delivery this kind of course and university's policy management that will be responsible for the effects of student engagement of IPTC, making more undergraduates more engagement on IPTC learning remains university's best hope for improvement, but only when NI is employed as advantage potential to lead and direct our action.

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