

Original Paper

The Current Situation, Hot Spots, and Suggestions on the
Education Research of the “Four Histories” in
Universities—Visualization Analysis Based on CiteSpace

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Abstract

Universities are an important support for cultivating qualified socialist builders and reliable successors. Carrying out “Four Histories” education in universities is of great significance in enhancing the political, ideological, and emotional identity of college students, and fully implementing the fundamental task of cultivating morality and cultivating talents. Using CiteSpace to visualize and analyze the current status and hotspots of the “Four Histories” education research in Chinese universities, and then construct a scientific knowledge graph. Research has found that the number of publications in this field has shown a gradually increasing trend over time; The cooperation between researchers and publishing institutions is loose, and a highly cohesive research group has not yet formed; The research topics mainly focus on universities, college students, ideological and political courses, the new era, value implications, and practical paths; There is relatively little research on the “Four Histories” education in vocational colleges; Scholars generally use theoretical research and rarely use empirical research. Promoting the education of “Four Histories” in universities should strengthen communication and cooperation among ideological and political workers in universities, and build a strong collaborative research community. Continuously adapting to changes in the international situation and meeting the growth needs of young college students.

Keywords

Universities, Education on the “Four Histories”, CiteSpace

1. Introduction

This article uses the visualization literature analysis software CiteSpace to analyze the literature on the education of the “Four Histories” in universities in recent years, aiming to showcase the current research status in this field, explore the research hotspots and trends of the “Four Histories” education, provide detailed academic reference materials for the research of the “Four Histories” education in universities, help promote the integration of the “Four Histories” education into ideological and political courses, and implement the task of cultivating moral character.

2. Current Status of Education and Research on the Four Histories in Universities

2.1 Publication Time and Quantity of Literature

From the perspective of literature distribution, although there has been a fluctuation since 2018, research on the education of the Four Histories in universities has generally been on the rise. From Figure 1, we can see that the first related article was published in 2018, applying the teaching of regional cultural relics and historical materials to the education of “Four Histories” in universities can better achieve the educational effect of ideological and political courses. In 2019, there were very few relevant journal articles, with 0. However, since 2020, the research on the education of “Four Histories” in universities has been increasing year by year. In 2020, there were 17 research articles, with the main focus on “Four Histories” How education can be integrated into the theoretical or practical teaching of ideological and political courses in universities? Scholars have preliminarily explored the current situation, value, difficulties, paths, etc. of the integration process. By 2021, the number of literature has surged to 220, and scholars have continued their research on the integration of “Four Histories” education into ideological and political theory courses in universities, continuously refining and deepening it. One is the expansion of research horizons and research subjects, which has added perspectives such as the new era, moral education, three comprehensive education, and patriotic education to the research field. In this perspective, strategies, methods, and paths for integrating “Four Histories” education into ideological and political theory courses in universities have been explored, and “Four Histories” education research targeting vocational colleges has emerged. The research subjects have expanded from ideological and political teachers to counselors, who explore the educational effects of the “Four Histories” through their own understanding of the academic and personality traits of college students, combined with ideological and political education in universities. The other is the deepening and refinement of research level, which combines the “Four Histories” education with the ideological and political courses in universities, such as the content and system of textbooks in “Ideology, Morality, and the Rule of Law” and “Outline of Modern Chinese History”, which is more targeted and timely. As of the latest date of the index, July 8th, 123 articles were published in 2022. The scope of research has further concretized and differentiated, with an increase in papers on the “Four Histories” education in vocational colleges and combined with the learning situation of college students, which is the object of higher education.

2.2 Distribution of Journal Sources

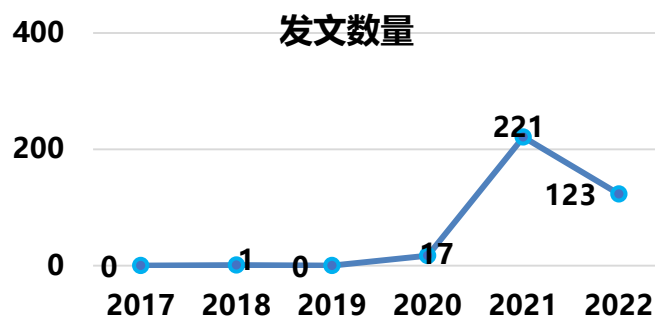


Figure 1. Annual Trends in Paper Publication

The statistical data of published journals are shown in Table 1, indicating that the topic involves multiple fields and multi-level publications. The journal with the highest publication volume is the core journal “Reference for Middle School Political Teaching”, with a total of 12 articles, mainly studying the value, difficulties, and paths of integrating “Four Histories” education into ideological and political courses in universities; Next is “University”, with 10 articles; Once again, there are 8 articles in “Beijing Education (Moral Education)”; Once again, there are 7 articles in the “Journal of College Counselors”, including “Education Observation”, “Education and Teaching Forum”, “College Counselors”, “Research on Ideological Education”, etc., all with 5 articles published. There are also some unlisted journals, such as “Research on Ideological and Political Education”, “China Higher Education”, “People’s Forum”, and other related literature. In addition, each most college journals also publish 1 and 2 articles. This indicates that ideological and political workers in various universities are also actively paying attention to the integration of “Four Histories” education into ideological and political education teaching, and their theoretical research is emerging in a scattered form and constantly expanding.

Table 1. Statistics on the Number of Journal Publications

序号	期刊名称	数量
1	中学政治教学参考	12
2	大学	10
3	学校党建与思想教育	8
4	北京教育 (德育)	8
5	高校辅导员学刊	7
6	品位经典	6
7	办公室业务	5
8	教育观察	5
9	教育教学论坛	5
10	公关世界	5
11	高校辅导员	5
12	思想教育研究	5

2.3 Distribution of Scholars and Institutions

From 2018 to 2022, there were a total of 519 authors involved in the research on the “Four Histories” education in universities, with an average of 0.7 articles per author. The main research author is often able to guide and represent the trend of research in this field, and is a key focus of general thematic research. Using CiteSpace visualization software, select slicing for one year and analyze literature authors and their collaborative relationships. As shown in Figure 2. The larger the font, the more articles the author posts, the lines indicate cooperation between authors, and the thickness of the lines indicates the depth of cooperation. From the graph, researchers have not published many articles, with 17 authors (Cao Zhen, Li Hao, Zeng Xueqing, Zhou Shangtao, Xiao Yihui, Pan Mingxue, Wang Yingcao, Li Hong, Yuan Yufang, Chang Donghui, Hou Bojun, Yang Jie, Zhang Yan, Zhang Huimin, Xu Lin, Yang Yansheng, and Yang Wensheng) having published 2 or more articles. The main research authors in the field of “Four Histories” education in universities have not yet appeared. From the perspective of cooperation network, the number of nodes in the graph is 515 and the number of connections is 208. The calculated overall network density is 0.0016, indicating that there is less collaboration among authors in this research field, low connectivity, loose cooperation between researchers and publishing institutions, and individual collaborations are only limited to internal units without forming academic research cooperation groups.

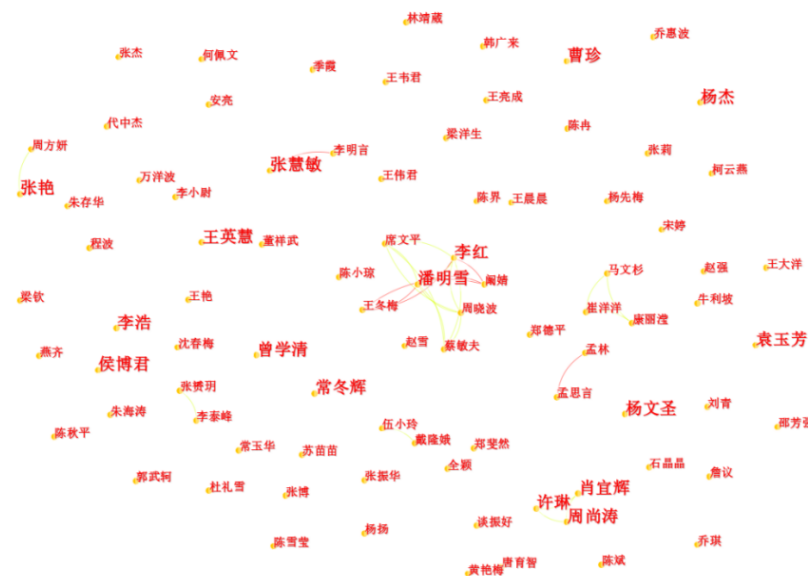


Figure 2. Author Collaboration Knowledge Graph

Research institutions are the units and basic platforms where researchers work. Analyzing research institutions helps to grasp the main publishing positions in the research field and the cooperative relationships between them. Select Node Types as “Institution” to obtain the research institution cooperation network and node graph for the “Four Histories” education in universities from 2018 to

2022. As shown in Table 2, the research institutions with the highest number of publications are Harbin Normal University (5 papers), Fujian Normal University (3 papers), Chengdu University of Technology (3 papers), Ningxia University (3 papers), Central China Normal University (3 papers), Beijing Normal University (3 papers), Lanzhou University of Technology (3 papers), Heilongjiang University (2 papers), Wuhan University (2 papers), Tianjin University (2 papers), etc., The research institutions are mainly concentrated in the Marxist Academy and propaganda departments of the school. According to the data, it can be found that the Marxist colleges in undergraduate universities are the backbone of academic research, and departments such as Propaganda Department, and Library have also issued documents. In addition to undergraduate colleges, many vocational colleges are also making great contributions to the education and research of the “Four Histories”, such as Hebei Youth Management Cadre College, Shenzhen Vocational and Technical College, Wuhu Vocational and Technical College, Nanjing Railway Vocational and Technical College, etc. It is worth noting that there is a strong cooperative relationship between departments and authors at Liaoning University of Technology, and most of the articles are published in the Journal of Liaoning University of Technology. The generated graph has a number of 361 nodes and 57 connections, with a density of 0.0009, indicating that the connection between Marxist colleges in universities, especially authoritative universities, is not close enough and basically presents a situation of fighting alone, without forming a certain scale of cooperative community.

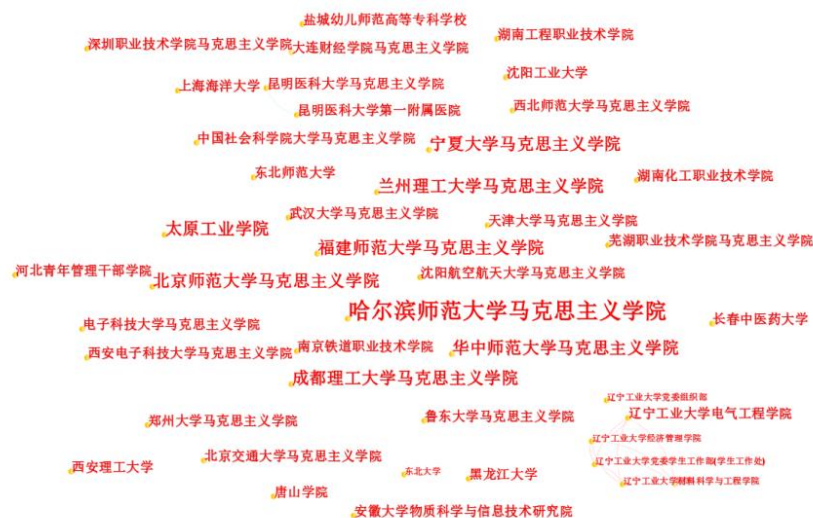


Figure 3. The Generated Keyword Co-occurrence Graph

Table 2. The Top 20 Major Institutions in Terms of Publication Volume

序号	发文量	机构名称	年份
1	5	哈尔滨师范大学马克思主义学院	2021
2	3	福建师范大学马克思主义学院	2021
3	3	成都理工大学马克思主义学院	2021
4	3	宁夏大学马克思主义学院	2021
5	3	太原工业学院	2020
6	3	华中师范大学马克思主义学院	2021
7	3	北京师范大学马克思主义学院	2021
8	3	兰州理工大学马克思主义学院	2021
9	2	黑龙江大学	2021
10	2	郑州大学马克思主义学院	2021
11	2	辽宁工业大学电气工程学院	2021
12	2	西安电子科技大学马克思主义学院	2020
13	2	天津大学马克思主义学院	2021
14	2	西北师范大学马克思主义学院	2021
15	2	芜湖职业技术学院马克思主义学院	2021
16	2	盐城幼儿师范高等专科学校	2022
17	2	电子科技大学马克思主义学院	2021
18	2	湖南工程职业技术学院	2022
19	2	深圳职业技术学院马克思主义学院	2021
20	2	武汉大学马克思主义学院	2020

3. Research Hotspots in the Education of Four Histories in Domestic Universities

3.1 Research Topic Analysis

Keyword co-occurrence analysis (Term frequency analysis) refers to the frequent analysis of the frequency of keywords in a specific research field, in order to identify or lock in hotspots in a specific research field. The mediating centrality of keywords measures to what extent they are located in the “middle” of other “point pairs” in the knowledge graph. Relatively speaking, this keyword may play an important “mediating” role and therefore be at the center of the network. By analyzing the frequency and centrality of keywords, we can understand the themes of the “Four Histories” education in universities in China in the past four years. The generated keyword co-occurrence graph is shown in Figure 3. The graph generates 177 keyword nodes with 229 connections and a density of 0.0147. A general centrality greater than 0.1 indicates that this keyword is a research hotspot. It can be seen that among the first few keywords, “universities”, “four histories”, “college students”, “ideological and political courses”, “new era”, “four histories’ education”, “ideological and political education”, “value implications” and other keywords have a high centrality and have an important position and influence in the entire network, Reflecting the hot topics in the field of educational research on the “Four Histories” in universities.

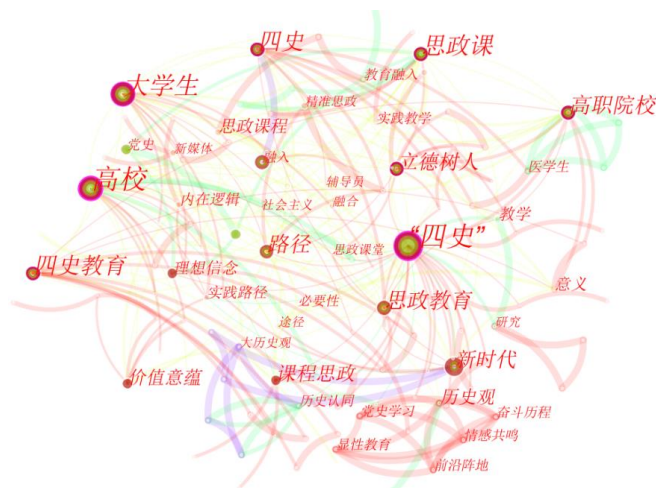


Figure 4. Keyword Co-occurrence Map of “Four Histories’ Education”

3.2 Analysis of Research Hotspots

Cluster analysis is conducted on the basis of keyword co-occurrence analysis, highlighting key nodes and important connections, which can reflect the research hotspots from the research topic. In the parameter settings, the time span is set to “2018-2022”, Years Per Slice is set to 1, and Node Types is selected as Keyword. By further optimizing and adjusting the graph, a clustering knowledge graph of the “Four Histories” education keywords in universities is obtained. As shown in Figure 4, in this network, we need to pay attention to two values, one is the Q value and the other is the S value, which represent the quality of clustering thought. The Q value (Modularity) is the clustering module value, and it is generally believed that $Q > 0.3$ means that the clustering structure is significant. The S value (Silhouette) is the average contour value of the cluster, and it is generally believed that clusters with $S > 0.5$ are reasonable, while clusters with $S > 0.7$ indicate that the clustering is convincing. From the clustering graph, it can be seen that $Q = 0.5932 > 0.3$, $S = 0.8179 > 0.5$, indicating that the clustering theme classification is reasonable and the variety of themes is relatively rich. It can be seen that the knowledge graph is centered around college students and the Four Histories, spreading in multiple directions, mainly including college students, universities, the Four Histories education, explicit education, the grand view of history, significant significance, and value dimensions. These clusters reflect the hot topics of educational research on the “Four Histories” in universities. The relationship between the 500 year development history of scientific socialism and the evolution history of human civilization is integrated into the ideological and political education and teaching of universities. Teachers and counselors are paying more attention to the ideological and psychological state of college students, integrating the “Four Histories” into daily teaching and conversation. From this, it can be seen that in the past four years, the research on the “Four Histories” education in China has mainly been reflected in the following four aspects.

The connotation of carrying out “Four Histories” education in universities. The implementation of “Four Histories” education in universities is to enable students to understand the historical process of

the Chinese people's continuous struggle to achieve their great dreams through various forms of educational and teaching activities. In the ideological and political classroom, carrying out the "Four Histories" education is to focus on moral education, political education, and knowledge education. They explore the connotation of carrying out "Four Histories" education in universities from the perspective of the dominant position and forefront of universities, based on the unprecedented historical changes in a century.

The value implication of integrating the education of "Four Histories" into ideological and political theory courses in universities. The education of "Four Histories" is an important tool for cultivating the soul of ideological and political theory courses in universities. Carrying out the education of "Four Histories" can effectively purify the negative impact of historical nihilism, stimulate mission responsibility, and strengthen ideals and beliefs. The "Four Histories" are not only an important content of ideological and political education in universities, but also a nutrient for promoting the growth and success of college students, and an important link in implementing the fundamental task of cultivating morality and cultivating talents.

The practical path of integrating "Four Histories" education into ideological and political theory courses in universities. Universities should pay attention to drawing wisdom and strength from history, focus on innovating the "Four Histories" education model and carrier, strive to create a high-quality teaching staff, and attach importance to building a long-term mechanism for "Four Histories" education. The integration of "Four Histories" education into ideological and political courses must be in accordance with the requirements of curriculum, activity, and three-dimensional integration. Efforts must be made to promote the integration of "Four Histories" education into classroom teaching and practical teaching of ideological and political courses, and to create a three-dimensional classroom for "Four Histories" education, achieving a deep integration of "Four Histories" education and ideological and political courses. Give full play to the leading role of teachers, the main role of students as receivers, the supporting role of the curriculum content system, and the guarantee role of optimizing teaching methods.

Methods and strategies for strengthening the education of "Four Histories" among college students. To strengthen the education of "Four Histories" for college students, it is necessary to comprehensively and systematically integrate the education of "Four Histories" into the construction of ideological and political courses in universities, pay attention to the positive leading role of ideological and political course teachers, and fully tap into the educational value of red cultural resources. To strengthen the education of the "Four Histories" for college students, we should accurately grasp the main theme, focus on the great changes and achievements since the founding of New China, the arduous exploration and major innovation since the reform and opening up, the magnificent and ups and downs of the world socialist movement, pay attention to promoting the spirit of seeking truth, grasp the methods of contradictions, adhere to the perspective of development, and use the perspective of connection to guide college students to learn from the past and the present, and create the future.

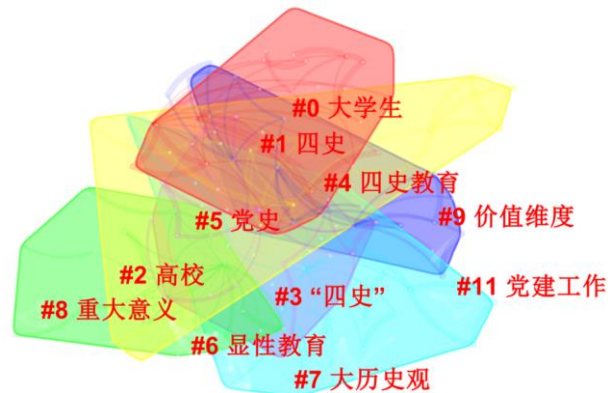


Figure 5. Keyword Cluster Graph of “Four Histories’ Education”

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

This article uses the visualization software CiteSpace (5.8. R3) to analyze 361 relevant literature on the “Four Histories” education research in universities in the CNKI database, including analysis of publication time and quantity, analysis of journal sources, analysis of researchers and institutions, keyword co-occurrence analysis, and keyword clustering analysis. The following conclusions are drawn.

Firstly, from the perspective of research status, researchers have consciously shifted their focus to vocational colleges, but the depth and intensity of research still need to be strengthened. Some scholars have observed the shortcomings of the development of “Four Histories” in vocational colleges, such as weak awareness of “Four Histories” among college students, emphasis on engineering practice in vocational colleges, and stagnant level of ideological and political teachers. They are actively exploring the path of integrating “Four Histories” education into ideological and political theory courses in vocational colleges. However, overall, there is relatively little research on the “Four Histories” education in vocational colleges, and there is even less valuable literature on integrating ideological and political courses. As of July 8, 2022, there are a total of 19 studies on the “Four Histories” education in vocational colleges, accounting for only 0.05%. There is still a lot of research space left for scholars to explore in the research of the “Four Histories” education in vocational colleges.

Secondly, from the perspective of collaborative research, some internal personnel in certain universities have already cooperated, but overall cooperation between Marxist colleges and universities, as well as between counselors and ideological and political teachers, is still loose. According to the analysis of researchers and research institutions, the connection density between Marxist colleges in universities, especially authoritative universities, is relatively low, mostly independent research, and there is no highly cohesive research group formed. This can easily reduce the exchange, sharing, and collision of ideas among scholars, which is not conducive to the in-depth development of the “Four Histories” education research in universities. Therefore, it is recommended that universities jointly discuss and build a regional education research alliance, timely share and learn the spirit of relevant documents,

“Four Histories” special lectures, “Four Histories” education materials package, etc., in order to promote the effectiveness of integrating “Four Histories” education into ideological and political education teaching research.

Thirdly, from the perspective of research methods, scholars generally use theoretical research and rarely use empirical research. The actual investigation of the research subjects and objects is insufficient, and some studies lack persuasiveness. Based on the sample data, it was found that most literature revolves around theoretical and policy interpretations, with very few conducting necessary empirical surveys, such as observations, interviews, and questionnaire surveys. Individual researchers abstractly discuss the “Four Histories” based on personal experience. The method path of integrating education into ideological and political courses is detached from specific teaching practices, making it difficult to logically reconcile and integrate, and lacking persuasiveness. With the development and application of the Internet, the personality preferences of post-2000s college students have undergone significant changes, and they are more inclined to express themselves. Researchers need to change the traditional way of indoctrination education, study the temperament and emotions of college students more carefully and patiently, play the role of teachers and students as the main body, and flexibly apply it. The popular teaching method integrates “Four Histories” education into educational teaching.

The education of the Four Histories is an important content of ideological and political education in universities, which can effectively promote and implement the role of moral education and talent cultivation in universities. The current world is in a period of unprecedented changes and the interweaving of the century’s epidemic. It is necessary to continuously deepen the reform and innovation of ideological and political courses, adapt to the changes in the international situation, adapt to the needs of national development, and adapt to the growth needs and acceptance characteristics of young college students. We need to strengthen communication and cooperation among ideological and political workers in universities, and at the same time, we should attach importance to communication and sharing with professional course teachers, organically integrate the “Four Histories” education with various professional courses, and promote ideological and political courses to go hand in hand with ideological and political courses, and collaborate in educating people.

Fund Project

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