

The Value Research of Ideological and Political Education

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Abstract: Ideological and political education serves as a crucial avenue for instilling in students a correct world outlook, life perspective, and values. It constitutes a fundamental initiative in fostering proficient socialist contributors and successors. Conducting research on the value of ideological and political education is an essential imperative for realizing the foundational mission of “building character and cultivating individuals” within this educational sphere. This research not only furnishes a scientific foundation for educational and instructional practices but also propels the progressive evolution of ideological and political education. Such endeavors hold profound theoretical and practical significance in nurturing a new generation equipped to meet the substantial challenge of national rejuvenation.

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1. The Philosophical Category of Value

The concept of value is multifaceted, and people’s understanding of value is diverse. Karl Marx once examined the term “value” and referenced the book “On the Origin of Philosophical Terms,” providing an explanation of the meaning of value. The book interprets the term “value” as having etymological connections with the ancient Sanskrit and Latin word meaning “to cover, protect, or overlay.” The term “value” further evolved from the derived meaning of “respect, admiration, and affection.” The original meaning of “value” is thus characterized as “having a protective and preserving role, being precious, respectable, and significant.” This fundamental meaning is generally associated with the term “value.” This relationship essentially tends towards the positive aspects of value. For instance, “Cihai,” a Chinese encyclopedia, defines value as “the use or positive effect of things.”

Through the in-depth analysis and deconstruction of the connotation of “value”, it becomes evident that the theoretical foundation of this study leads back to the fundamental philosophical concepts within Marx’s theory of value. The criterion for assigning value to something should be grounded in the realization of people’s free and comprehensive development and the significance of things in the lives and activities of individuals, groups, and even the entire society. As articulated in the seminal Marxist theoretical work, “Basic Principles of Marxism,” it posits that “value is a philosophical category reflecting the meaningful relationship between the subject and the object, signifying the impact that the object has on the life and activities of individuals, groups, and even the entire society” In the pursuit of a more scientifically and systematically grounded exploration of value research, recognizing the overall nature and significance of the human development satisfied by the object in the survival and progress of the subject, we categorize value into “purpose value” and “instrumental value.” The purpose denotes the satisfaction of a specific need in itself, while the tool represents the conditions and processes required to achieve the goal.

2. The theoretical basis for the value of ideological and political education

Zhang Yaocan, Zheng Yongting, and others have defined the value of ideological and political education as “an objective subject-object relationship rooted in the laws governing the formation and development of the subject’s ideological and political character. It encompasses the correlation between the existence and essence of ideological and political education and its alignment, appropriateness, and proximity to human nature, purpose, and needs.” Shen Zhuanghai, in the New Principles of Ideological and Political Education, defines the value of ideological and political education as follows: “The positive significance of ideological and political education, with people and social organizations as the subject, lies in the relationship aimed at fulfilling the needs of individuals, society, and national development.”

This perspective remains highly representative today, primarily defining ideological and political education as a subject-object or satisfaction relationship. The subject is the individual, encompassing the sum of all social relations, including individuals, collectives, and various real people within the social context. As Li Deshun articulates: “The ‘person’ in real, concrete, and social terms is not a singular abstraction but a complex life system with multiple levels such as individual, group, and class.” The realization of a realistic person” is achieved through

the operation of ideological and political education itself. The object is ideological and political education, serving as a tool and support in the process of attaining the ultimate goal of comprehensive human development. By borrowing the concept of the subject-object relationship to define the value of ideological and political education, its value becomes more targeted than the relationship between people and things.” The expounded content is more specific, and this subject-object relationship is objective rather than subjective.

Moreover, the process of achieving this goal involves adhering to the laws governing the formation and development of the Juche ideological and political character as the yardstick. It aims to clarify the value content, moving beyond the previous generality of value based solely on “needs” and aligning more closely with the disciplinary characteristics of ideological and political education. Ultimately, the realization of the value of ideological and political education hinges on whether the existence and nature of ideological and political education are consistent, appropriate, and in harmony with human nature, goals, and needs. In other words, the issue of the value of ideological and political education has actually helped us to further clarify that ideological and political education is to resolve the contradiction between the ideological and moral requirements put forward by a certain social development and the ideological and moral level of the people at the present stage, and the significance of the value of ideological and political education is to make the contradictions and disparities gradually tend to be closer and the same.

3. The basic form of the value of ideological and political education

Considering the overall nature and impact of the scale essential for the survival and development of the core entity in ideological and political education, the value of ideological and political education can be categorized into two distinct forms: purposive value and instrumental (means) value. The purpose denotes the intrinsic satisfaction necessary for the development of a particular scale. In other words, the value contributed by ideological and political education activities in the pursuit of realizing the scale of comprehensive human development is termed purposive value. On the other hand, the tool (means) represents the conditions and processes required to attain the goal. Therefore, the value of ideological and political education activities lies in their participation in the realization and enhancement of other values during the process of achieving the scale of comprehensive human development.

3.1 The purposeful value of ideological and political education

Marx stated: “Man’s purpose is the way and method that determines his activity as a law, and he must subordinate his will to this end.” The concept of “purpose” within the realm of practice pertains to the fulfillment itself that addresses the requirements of a specific developmental scale. It involves the concretization and actualization of the subject’s intrinsic purpose, acting as the guiding mechanism for the subject’s value choices. The outcome of satisfying this guiding mechanism is the realization of surplus within the human scale at a particular stage.

Hence, the purposive value of ideological and political education centers around considering “realistic individuals” as the primary value entity. This approach uses the laws governing the formation and development of ideological and political character as the benchmark. Its primary focus is on addressing the needs of “real people” concerning ideological and political qualities and comprehensive individual development. It aims to align the existence and nature of ideological and political education with the nature, purpose, and needs of “realistic people”, striving for consistency, appropriateness, and closeness.

In essence, the value of ideological and political education should be framed around the all-round development of “realistic individuals”. This perspective ensures that ideological and political education activities are in harmony with the “will” of the primary entity, facilitating the cultivation of new individuals of the times and the realization of people’s freedom and comprehensive

3.2 The instrumental (means) value of ideological and political education

The instrumental value of ideological and political education pertains to the means or tools employed in achieving the goals and tasks of ideological and political education. This value is intricately linked to the efficiency and worth of various tools, methods, means, or resources utilized in educational practice. The key consideration is whether these tools can effectively accomplish the intended educational

objectives. Thus, the instrumental value of ideological and political education is synonymous with the efficacy and efficiency of the diverse tools and means employed in educational practice. It serves as the criterion for assessing the appropriateness of these tools and means in the context of ideological and political education.

Over the course of human history's continuous development, specific goals and means within ideological and political education resemble individual links in a chain. In the process of shaping the value of ideological and political education, although the ultimate goal remains constant, it can be further categorized into short-term, medium-term, and long-term objectives based on temporal criteria. They are not isolated or static but rather undergo constant change and updates. In this dynamic context, ideological and political education requires a continual integration of new content to propel its own innovation and development in tandem with the evolving times.

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