

# A Review on the Pedagogical Challenges of Chinese Teachers on the Marxist Philosophy of Education

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**Abstract:** Marxist philosophy of education is an important part of the Chinese educational system which is a mandatory course for college students in Chinese colleges and universities. This literature review aims to explore the pedagogical challenges of Chinese teachers in teaching Marxist philosophy. This paper hopes to contribute to a comprehensive educational understanding of the relationship between ideology and pedagogy in the educational landscape of China.

**Keywords:** Marxist Philosophy of Education; Chinese Teachers; Pedagogical Challenges.

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## 1. Introduction

Humanities courses, such as philosophy, enable students to have a better understanding of the history, culture, political economy, and religious laws of a particular country (Edwards & Ritchie, 2022). In China, Marxist philosophy is an important part of humanities in the field of education especially in research (Wang & Peters, 2023) which is a mandatory humanities subject for undergraduates and graduate students in Chinese universities. Marxist philosophy of education serves as an important theoretical foundation for reforms (Boya & Shi, 2023).

Marxist philosophy has been a fundamental component of educational discourse in China, deeply influencing the country's pedagogical approaches and educational policies. Rooted in the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, this philosophy advocates for education as a means to achieve social justice and class consciousness, emphasizing the role of education in liberating the working class from oppressive societal structures (Huang & Ding, 2018). The integration of Marxist philosophy into the educational system in China has been important, aligning with the country's broader ideological framework of the society (Zhou, 2020).

Despite the impact of Marxist philosophy in shaping educational practices in China, there remains gaps in research concerning the pedagogical strategies employed by teachers to effectively convey Marxist principles in the classroom. Existing literature predominantly focuses on the theoretical underpinnings of Marxist education and its alignment with Chinese political ideology (Li & Yu, 2017). However, there are a few studies that critically examine the pedagogical approaches teachers use to translate these abstract philosophical concepts into practical, accessible lessons for students. This gap is particularly given the increasing challenges of education today, where teachers are required to balance traditional ideological teachings with contemporary pedagogical methods that engage and resonate with students (Wang, 2021).

Therefore, the value of Marxist education in China lies not only on the content being taught but also on the methods of delivery. Teachers' pedagogical choices play a significant role in how students perceive and internalize Marxist concepts, which, in turn, impacts their development as

socially conscious individuals (Zhang & Liu, 2019). Moreover, understanding the challenges and opportunities teachers face in this context can provide insights into how Marxist education can be adapted to meet the needs of a rapidly changing society while remaining true to its ideological roots.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### 2.1. Marxist Philosophy Education in China

Our country's colleges and universities have always attached great importance to Marxist philosophy education and have long listed "Marxist Philosophy" as the first humanities course. Through philosophical education, contemporary college students can be guided to understand the world and learn the purpose of life. The purpose of philosophy is to guide people to become human beings and help college students establish a correct worldview and values. This is especially important for contemporary college students.

Engels (1940) once pointed out: "If a nation wants to stand at the highest peak of science, it must not be without theoretical thinking for a moment." This sentence is still engraved in front of the National Science Museum of the United States. It shows that theoretical thinking is a great magic weapon for national development and prosperity, both today and in the future. The so-called theoretical thinking refers to the subject's in-depth rational thinking on various issues under the guidance of a certain philosophical worldview and methodology. As a scientific worldview and methodology, Marxist philosophy has far-reaching significance in improving theoretical thinking, achieving true understanding, and ultimately realizing theoretical transformation of reality. Theoretical thinking under the guidance of Marxist philosophy is materialistic, dialectical, and aims at practice.

Philosophy, as an indispensable and important part of culture, is an essential content for building a country's own cultural system. Our country has always attached great importance to the construction of humanities such as philosophy and literature and has achieved considerable results. However, there are still many unsatisfactory aspects in the research and development of philosophy in our country,

especially the fact that there are very few original philosophical thoughts. Therefore, in order to build national culture, an innovation in philosophical content and teaching must be promoted (Tang, 2017). Huang (2019) said that with the rapid development of the country's economy, people's ideological concepts have also undergone profound changes, leading to the formation of individualism, money worship, egoism, and hedonism in college students. This makes some college students regard the pursuit of money as the only purpose of life. These ideas are not only detrimental to the healthy growth of individuals but also detrimental to the long-term development of the country. This requires people to be guided by the dialectical materialism and historical materialism of Marxist philosophy and adhere to a correct outlook on life (Huang, 2019).

## 2.2. Problems Existing in the Teaching of Marxist Philosophy

Han (2004) agreed that the crisis in philosophy and philosophy of education should be found in philosophy and philosophy of education itself. The main reason why people are not interested in philosophy is does not meet the needs of the society and cannot keep up with its the needs, such as the pace of progress of the times. The knowledge-based activities of understanding and memorizing should be turned into thinking-based activities. Philosophical education is not to teach students knowledge and conclusions, but to guide students to develop a thinking habit. According to Sun (2000) "any true philosophy" is always the unity of "upward compatibility", "containment of the times" and "logical expansion". The basic idea in teaching practice is to stimulate students' theoretical interests, broaden students' theoretical horizons, impact students' theoretical thinking, and enhance students' theoretical realm (Sun, 2000).

On the other hand, Wang (2004) mentioned the reason why the reform of Marxist philosophy teaching is unsatisfactory is that people have not grasped the fundamental problems in the teaching of Marxist philosophy, that is, incorporating Marxism into the teaching of Marxist philosophy. Philosophy teaching is regarded as knowledge education and knowledge dissemination, which is a seriously flawed teaching concept. Philosophical research is essentially a study of how the relationship between man and the world should be (Wang, 2004). Liu (2004) mentioned that many problems of contemporary philosophy education in China are rooted in its improper goal positioning. In short, it is to deliberately educate rather than improve quality. In order to get out of the current dilemma of philosophy education, a reflection on its actual performance and underlying reasons must be done to embark on the path of change. Jiang (2003) stated that the premise of China's public philosophy education reform is that philosophy education cannot be equated with political education or used as a part of political education. Philosophical education is philosophical education. It is neither scientific education nor political education. The key to China's public philosophy education reform is the transformation of philosophical concepts (Jiang, 2003).

## 2.3. The Challenges Facing Contemporary Marxist Philosophy Teaching in China

A number of philosophy teachers lack an overall and macro grasp of Marxist philosophy; however, they only study Marxist philosophy rather than the development process of the entire philosophy (Sun, 2004). Philosophy subjects are

different from other subjects. Philosophy History itself is philosophy. If one does not understand the entire development process of philosophy, one cannot teach Marxist philosophy well (Zhen, 2004). In addition, some teachers of Marxist philosophy have little understanding of other scientific knowledge other than Marxist philosophy, have relatively poor knowledge of natural sciences, and lack sufficient understanding of science, literature, art, religion, etc., resulting in the inability to explain philosophy clearly.

At present, many Chinese Marxist philosophy teachers only focus on the theory itself, do not study how to combine theory with reality, and lack the use of philosophical perspectives to explore social hot issues, which separates theory and practice, causing students to think that learning philosophy is of little significance (Chen, 2005). Emphasis is placed on imparting knowledge, emphasizing the accumulation of knowledge, and neglecting the cultivation of abilities and qualities. Students lack space for independent thinking. There is too much emphasis on memorizing knowledge, neglect of training students in scientific thinking methods, and failure to highlight the difference between philosophy courses and other courses (Chen, 2005). Philosophy is mainly a course for training thinking ability. The teaching process of Marxist philosophy is regarded as a single information output process, and the two-way communication between teachers and students is ignored. There is a lack of democracy in teaching, and a lack of discussion-based, participatory, problem-based and research-based teaching methods in teaching methods. Putting students in a vicious cycle of passive listening, writing, memorizing, memorizing, and taking tests; without realizing that they should take the initiative to learn. Theory is divorced from reality, teaching lacks social practice links, the examination system still has drawbacks, and teaching forms and methods are relatively single (Zhu, 2004).

Contemporary Chinese college students are influenced by pragmatism and money worship believing that philosophy is dispensable and has little practical use. Therefore, they lack interest in Marxist philosophy courses and lose interest in learning (Chen, 2005). Without motivation and enthusiasm, Marxist philosophy classes have seen low attendance rates, low lecture listening rates, and high truancy rates (Chen, 2005).

## 2.4. Marxist Philosophy Teaching Reform

Han (2002) argued that the purpose of philosophy teaching is to make philosophy become philosophy. A true philosophy educator must cultivate his own critics and nourish the gravediggers of his own thoughts with the milk of wisdom (Han, 2002). Moreover, Peng (2003) added that philosophy can shape the soul of a nation, inspire the spiritual creativity of a nation, and enable a nation to stand among the nations of the world in the era of globalization. Based on this understanding, the position of philosophy teaching in the entire modern higher education is strengthened. It is neither technical education nor political education, but human nature education.

The starting point and foothold of Marxist philosophy education reform is not only the reform of learning methods and teaching methods, but also the "reflection" and "positioning" of "philosophy" and "philosophy education". In the teaching process, philosophy should make it clear what philosophy is, and it should be explained from a vertical and horizontal perspective. The vertical perspective is also a

historical perspective because philosophy is the history of philosophy, and teachers need to have in-depth research and understanding of the history of philosophy. The horizontal perspective is to inquire about philosophy from its relationship with religion, art, science, etc.

Yuan (2005) said that the teaching philosophy should be changed to conform to the "love of wisdom" and "nature of enlightening wisdom" of philosophy. The teaching of Marxist philosophy should reflect the characteristics of the times, the teaching of Marxist philosophy should pay attention to the practicality, the teaching of Marxist philosophy should be close to life, and the popular and popular teaching should be strengthened.

China's philosophy forum has raised many new issues in the development of Marxist philosophy. The philosophy forum has conducted extensive discussions on these new issues, and in this discussion has broadened and deepened the basic theory of Marxist philosophy and provided information for the teaching of Marxist philosophy. The teaching content with a strong sense of the times should be incorporated into the teaching of philosophy. Combine philosophy forum and philosophy forum.

When teaching philosophy, there should be a focus on stimulating students' theoretical interest in philosophy, because interest is the best teacher. Students can be inspired to be interested in Marxist philosophy with the help of social hot cases and analysis of the Marxist philosophical principles contained in social hot spots. The second is to broaden the theoretical horizons of Marxist philosophy, and to broaden the theoretical horizons of Marxist philosophy in the comparison of Marxist philosophy with science, art, and religion. The third impact is theoretical thinking, which is to raise issues that exist in this era and guide students to use philosophical thinking to try to solve problems. The last step is to improve the theoretical realm, that is, to establish an advanced world outlook, outlook on life and values.

Since Marxist philosophy itself is a practical philosophy, practicality is the fundamental characteristic of Marxist philosophy. All in the teaching process, teachers are required to collect social hot cases and practical problems faced by college students themselves to understand and learn Marxist philosophy and apply what they have learned.

### 3. Conclusion

The above views all believe that Marxist philosophy should teach philosophy in a philosophical way. They believe that philosophy teaching is a subject that makes people wise and cultivates ways of thinking, not just a subject that memorizes knowledge. Marxist philosophy teaches What the student needs is not the absolute truth, but the method of further research and the critical spirit. Therefore, in the process of reforming Marxist philosophy teaching, there should not be focus on knowledge education, but guide students to establish dialectical thinking methods, establish a spirit of eternal innovation, and cultivate theoretical interests, expand

theoretical horizons, and stimulate theoretical thinking, improve the theoretical realm, in the study of Marxist philosophy, improve yourself and reflect on the Marxist philosophy itself.

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