

Incorporating Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization into China's Ideological and Political Education: Its Inheritance and Innovations

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Abstract: Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization has pointed out the direction for China's ecological conservation and construction in the new era, and provided guidelines and basic principles for the concrete actions in this regard. Meanwhile, it has also provided a new direction for the development of ideological and political education. This article analyzes the theoretical basis and core content of Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization, and explores its integration into traditional ideological and political education, including adhering to Marxism, inheriting the ecological philosophy of China's fine traditional culture, and viewing local practices from a global perspective. On the basis of that, it is further proposed that the integration of Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization into ideological and political education should be carried out horizontally and vertically to construct an educational community, in a bid to form a new path of moral education with unified goals and in a gradual manner. By horizontally, it means that it is necessary to comprehensively apply modern curriculum education concepts and collaborate with various ecological elements such as schools, families, communities, and the Internet. While by vertically, it means that it is necessary to carry out eco-civilization education with different focuses for students at different school ages in primary schools, middle schools, and colleges.

Keywords: Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization; Ideological and Political Education; Inheritance; Innovation.

1. Introduction

Ideological and political education is an important way for Chinese universities to achieve the fundamental task of cultivating talents and their morality. Since the new era, General Secretary Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasized the need to attach importance to the construction of ideological and political theory courses. Recently, Xi has once again issued important instructions on the construction of ideological and political theory courses in schools, emphasizing that on the new journey of the new era, the construction of ideological and political theory courses is facing a new situation and new tasks, in the light of which, we need to strive for new achievements, and "stick to traditions while making innovations to promote the development of ideological and political theory courses on the practical level, in a bid to make them targeted and attractive to students." [1] Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization is an important component of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. It is a significant achievement that combines the basic principles of Marxism with the practice of eco-civilization construction in China, and with the fine traditional culture of China [2]. It points out a new direction for ideological and political education at the new development stage. Besides, promoting green development and the harmonious coexistence of man and nature is related to building a Chinese path to modernization. As the main cradle of high-quality talents, universities shoulder the responsibility of cultivating builders and successors of socialism who have a high sense of mission, green development concepts, and ecological practice abilities. Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization has expanded the breadth and depth of ideological and political education, breaking free from the limitations of "interpersonal moral education", while also enriching the theory of education.

Therefore, focusing on building eco-civilization and a Beautiful China, integrating Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization into ideological and political education is not only an important manifestation of fully implementing the Thought, but also a manifestation of the spirit of the times and a response to ideological and political education.

2. Theoretical Basis and Core Content of Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization

Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization draws on the ecological wisdom of Marxist philosophy, the essence of China's profound ecological cultural tradition, and the successful experience accumulated in ecological construction since the reform and opening up, laying the fundamental principles and practical guidance for the promotion of socialist ecological civilization with Chinese characteristics for a new era.

2.1. Theoretical Basis of Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization

The profound exposition of the relationship between man and nature in Marxist philosophy has laid a solid theoretical foundation for the formation of Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels believed that there is an inseparable relationship between man and nature, and the two are inherently unified. "Man is a product of nature, developed in his own environment and together with that environment." [3] Man possesses natural attributes. "Man creates the environment, and similarly, the environment also creates man." [4] As the sum of all social relationships, man not only exists in society, but also develops there. Sociality is an essential attribute of human beings. Labor, as "the general condition for material exchange between man and nature" [5],

is a practical activity that solves the relationship between man and nature, and serves as an intermediary for the dialectic of man and nature - the relationship between man and nature. In addition, the relationship between man and nature is also influenced by social systems. Capitalism pursues the maximization of interests, leading to excessive exploitation of natural resources and environmental damage, resulting in an alienation of the relationship between man and nature and the emergence of environmental crises. Only by realizing communism can we truly resolve the contradictions between man and nature, and between humans themselves, ultimately realizing the reconciliation between man and nature.

China's fine traditional ecological culture has laid the historical and cultural foundation for Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization. The ideas of harmonious coexistence between heaven, earth, and man are embodied in the traditional Chinese view of ecological culture, such as "Dao follows nature" in Taoism, "unity of heaven and man" in Confucianism, and "equality of all sentient beings" in Buddhism. For example, during the reign of the legendary ruler Emperor Yao in ancient times, the political code Shang Shu · Yao Dian recorded: "Then he ordered Xi and He to strictly follow the heavenly way, record the movement of the sun, moon and stars, formulate a calendar, and inform people of the weather and seasons." Here, "strictly follow the heavenly way" means to follow the laws of nature [6]. This shows that in ancient Chinese, governors realized the importance of respecting and revering nature. Ecological prosperity leads to the prosperity of civilization, while ecological decline leads to the decline of it. Throughout history, Chinese sages, such as Mencius and Zhuangzi from the Warring States period, Dong Zhongshu from the Han Dynasty, and Zhang Zai and Zhu Xi from the Song Dynasty, have all put forward views on the harmonious coexistence between man and nature, and the unity of man and nature. These profound historical views and simple values have injected cultural elements into Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization.

The practical experience accumulated by the Communist Party of China (CPC) in eco-civilization construction has laid a solid foundation for Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization. Since the launch of reform and opening up in 1978, China's economy has achieved rapid development. Meanwhile, environmental problems have become increasingly prominent, such as the major water pollution on the Songhua River in 2005, the water pollution in Taihu Lake in 2007, the severe haze pollution over the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region in 2013, and the cadmium-polluted wheat in Henan in 2017. The Chinese government places the construction of ecological civilization at a prominent position in its overall work, and keeps strengthening the systematic governance of ecological issues at a higher level: in 2012, it included "ecological civilization" in the Five-sphere Integrated Plan; in 2015, it incorporated "green" into the New Development Concepts; in 2017, it took "adhering to the harmonious coexistence of man and nature" as one of the "basic strategies" of the new era; in 2022, it included "harmonious coexistence of man and nature" as one of the characteristics of "a Chinese path to modernization", and noted that the development of a "Beautiful China" must be given prominence in the construction of a strong country. Through several practices and policy adjustments, a socialist ecological civilization system has come into being, which promotes global sustainable development in a way with distinctive Chinese

characteristics.

2.2. Core Content of Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization

Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012, the construction of ecological civilization has been integrated into the big blueprint for the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The Party has been promoting theoretical and practical exploration, as well as institutional reforms in the field of ecological civilization, resulting in a series of new ideas, thoughts, and strategic concepts, which ultimately converges into the system of Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization.

The core content of Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization is embodied in the following aspects: taking strengthening the overall leadership of the CPC over the construction of eco-civilization as the fundamental guarantee, and keeping improving the governance ability of the CPC in this respect; taking "Lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" as the core concept, clarifying the dialectic between "lucid waters and lush mountains" and "invaluable assets", and transforming the former into the latter; taking "sound ecological environment is the most inclusive benefits to people's wellbeing" as the aim and requirement of eco-civilization construction, preventing and controlling pollution, and preventing ecological environment risks in a bid to build a healthy, livable and beautiful homeland for all; taking "promoting the green development model and a green way of life as a profound revolution in people's mindset on development" as a strategic path, to promote the comprehensive green transformation of economic and social development, and strive to achieve carbon peaking and carbon neutrality; taking "a holistic approach to conserving mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes, and grasslands" as a systematic concept to carry out ecological conservation and restoration, and improve the quality and stability of the ecosystem; taking "protecting the eco-environment with the strictest regulations and laws" as the institutional guarantee, and making regulations mandatory in order for them to become a powerful deterrent, in this way, we will modernize the eco-environment governance system and governance capacity; taking "mobilizing all Chinese people for the construction of a Beautiful China" as a social force, advocating green lifestyles, and building a Beautiful China; taking "seeking the path of global eco-civilization construction together" as a global initiative, promoting global sustainable development, and jointly building a clean and beautiful world to protect the home of all mankind. [7]

3. Incorporating Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization into China's Ideological and Political Education: Its Inheritance and Innovations

Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization inherits and carries forward the dialectic between man and nature. It integrates the values advocated by the fine traditional Chinese culture, such as "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" and "a community of life for man and nature", and reflects the dialectic of local practice and global perspectives, which is deeply compatible with China's ideological and political education.

3.1. Adherence to the Ideological Foundation of Marxism

The central task of China's ideological and political education is to arm the whole Party and educating the people with Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, promote the normalization and institutionalization of ideal and belief education, cultivate and practice socialist core values, and strengthen socialist legal education, etc. [8] Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era is a new achievement of combining Marxism with Chinese realities, as an important component of which, Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization not only inherits the dialectic of man and nature contained in Marxism, but also breaks through the dilemma between economic development and ecological conservation by further putting forward the core concept of "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets". It lifts the ecological view contained in Marxist philosophy to a new level. In addition, the new concept of green development contained in Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization reflects the green transformation of the socialist mode of production in a comprehensive way, which also transcends the capitalist mode of production. Furthermore, the core content of Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization, such as "mobilizing all Chinese people for the construction of a Beautiful China" and "seeking the path of global eco-civilization construction together", demonstrates the Marxist values of patriotism, collectivism, and socialist education advocated by China's ideological and political education. It can be seen that Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization adheres to the ideological foundation of Marxism and constructs a new system of ideological and moral values in the new era.

3.2. Adherence to Ecological Philosophy of China's Fine Traditional Culture

Since ancient times, Chinese civilization has shown an extreme worship of the way of heaven, which later evolved into a respect of nature and the integration with it. The Taoist philosophy of "Dao follows nature" advocates a way of governing by doing nothing except conforming to nature; the Confucian concept of "good timing, right location, and harmony among people" emphasizes the organic unity and harmonious coexistence between man and nature. These ideas all embody the philosophical ideas of respecting, conforming to the laws of nature, and coexisting and prospering with nature. Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization integrates the ecological philosophy embedded in China's fine traditional culture with China's contemporary economic and social development, proposing creative ideas such as "a community of life for man and nature", which reflect a deep understanding and creative development of China's fine traditional culture. In addition, the aim of Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization requires that "sound ecological environment is the most inclusive benefits to people's wellbeing", which is also a further development of the "people-centered" philosophy in traditional Chinese culture, emphasizing the improvement of people's quality of life through environmental protection and ecological governance. The advocacy of "seeking the path of global eco-civilization construction together" also reflects the simple and harmonious development concept of "the Great Harmony of the World" pursued by Chinese civilization.

3.3. The Dialectic of Local Practice and Global Perspectives

Ideas such as "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" and "constructing a community of shared future for mankind" contained in Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization are not only China's local environmental policies, but also deeply reflect China's fulfilling of its commitment to global eco-environment governance through practical actions. As the world's largest developing country, China is facing the dual challenges of the largest industrialization drive in human history and the largest and most fragile ecological environment pressure in history. Through years of practice and experience gained, China has embarked on a unique path regarding environmental governance, such as large-scale pollution control campaigns, the establishment of ecological protection zones, and the promotion of green and low-carbon technologies. "In just a few decades, China has completed the industrialization process that developed countries have gone through for hundreds of years, creating two miracles of rapid economic development and long-term social stability." [9] At the same time, China signed the Paris Agreement, has been a promoter of a green "the Belt and Road Initiative" and other international actions, solemnly promised that its carbon dioxide emissions will reach the peak by 2030, and it will strive to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060, a demonstration of its commitment to global sustainable development. Clearly, Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization embodies the outstanding governing wisdom of the CPC in dealing with ecological and environmental issues, and demonstrates the uniqueness and advantages of the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics. It is of great significance for enhancing students' patriotism, pride in the motherland, and social responsibilities.

4. Incorporating Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization into China's Ideological and Political Education: Innovations

The integration of Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization into ideological and political education requires the construction of an educational community through horizontal and vertical links in the context of "great moral education" to form a moral education training system with unified goals step by step. [10] Horizontally, modern curriculum education concepts and methods should be used to integrate explicit education and implicit education, direct courses and indirect courses, small classrooms and large social classrooms, etc., to integrate the content of Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization into all aspects of ideological and political education. Vertically, we should draw lessons from the "Lucas Growth Model" to implement eco-civilization education with different focuses for students of different school ages, in a bid to achieve full-chain innovation of ecological education in ideological and political theory courses.

4.1. Incorporating Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization into China's Ideological and Political Education: Horizontal Innovations

The integration of Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization into ideological and political education requires the participation of multiple subjects, the integration of multiple

resources, the coordination of multiple courses, and the synergy of multiple channels – elements of the concept of the “great moral education”. We should use modern concepts on curricula to pool scattered and partial eco-civilization thoughts in schools, families, societies, and networks and then form an all-round, full-process, all-member integrated ideological and political education network.

First, integrating “adherence to the harmonious coexistence of man and nature” into ideological and political education through the combination of theoretical courses and practical courses. Theoretical classes are the main channel for students to receive ideological and political education where lecturers provide an in-depth explanation of the basic content, historical context, and important status of Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization. By participating in special seminars, case analyses, or multidisciplinary seminars, students get the chance to conduct theoretical explorations on related topics such as the harmonious coexistence of man and nature, which will strengthen their understanding of the theories. At the same time, students are invited to participate in social practice activities related to ecological and environmental protection (such as water resources protection, garbage classification, waste recycling, etc.), to join green ecological related projects (such as environmentally friendly product development, eco-agriculture, green supply chain management), etc., to enhance their practical experience of eco-civilization.

Second, integrating the idea of “lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets” into ideological and political education through the combination of explicit education and implicit education. Focusing on the idea, we can integrate multi-disciplinary knowledge in philosophy, ecology, economics, and sociology into one, and encourage project-based learning, case analyses, role play, meetings, special lectures, etc. to carry out ideological and political education, in a bid to disseminate the idea. At the same time, subtle and implicit education should be promoted. By creating an ecological atmosphere and organizing green campus activities, we can carry out campus ecological culture construction. We should also integrate the concept of eco-civilization into family education and community life for our students to go green in their life.

Third, integrating “seeking the path of global eco-civilization construction together” into ideological and political education through the combination of direct and indirect courses. We could set a special international chapter on Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization focusing on global ecological issues, sustainable development goals, and environmental governance mechanisms of various countries. In it, we could talk about ecological issues facing the world such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and marine pollution, and introduce international ecological governance frameworks, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement, discussing the roles and responsibilities of each country in ecological governance. At the same time, we could also carry out ecological cooperation projects and exchange activities with foreign universities, or use digital learning platforms and online media to learn about the experiences and challenges of eco-civilization construction in various countries, in order for our students to gain a global perspective, and explore the road to global eco-civilization construction together.

Fourth, integrating the idea of “sound ecological environment is the most inclusive benefits to people’s wellbeing” into ideological and political education through

the combination of small school classrooms and large social classrooms. In the new era, sound ecological environment is a concrete manifestation of people’s yearning for a better life. A beautiful environment can not only provide better public resources, but also improve people’s quality of life and sense of happiness. It’s important for us to construct an ideological and political education system on the topic of people’s livelihood and well-being, in which we could lecture on the relationship between ecological environment protection, green development, ecology and people’s livelihood and well-being, and systematically explain to students the impact of environmental protection on people’s lives, social stability and national development with examples of China’s current environmental challenges and global ecological ones. At the same time, students should be brought into real society, where they could deeply understand the impact of environmental changes on people’s lives, economic development and social changes by conducting social surveys and volunteering in various environmental protection activities.

4.2. Incorporating Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization into China’s Ideological and Political Education: Vertical Innovations

The ideological and political education of young people is a long process. The integration of Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization into ideological and political education must be carried out continuously and in a targeted manner according to the different stages of their growth [11]. Vertically, we should integrate Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization into all stages of education in universities, middle schools and primary schools, and meanwhile pool the resources of the whole society to build “big classrooms”, “big platforms” and a strong “teacher team”.

First, at primary schools, students can develop ecological ethics through personal experience of “the harmonious coexistence of man and nature.” Primary school students are in a stage of rapid physical development and they have strong perceptual abilities. Their memories are mainly unconscious, concrete and mechanical. Their emotions are easily affected by the external environment, and they are very curious about the world and like to imitate. For primary school students in lower grades, we could organize parent-child eco-environmental activities, such as outdoor adventures, tree planting, wild animals and plants observation, etc., for them to feel the beauty and magic of nature, and inspire them to love nature and protect nature. For senior primary school students, their thinking gradually transitions to abstract logical thinking, and their emotions are more stable, rich and profound. Therefore, we can regularly carry out environmental themed class meetings, lectures, exhibitions, community environmental protection activities, etc. for them deepen their knowledge and understanding of ecological issues.

At middle schools, through classrooms inside and outside the school, internship practice bases, etc., students can understand the meaning of “lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets” and establish the political literacy of conserving resources and protecting the environment. Middle school students are in adolescence and face multiple changes in their physical, psychological and social roles. Their physical growth has entered the second peak period, with more obvious gender characteristics, and improved athletic abilities. Psychologically, there are obvious changes. They begin to explore their identity, and think about deep-seated

issues. Their emotions are prone to fluctuations, they value relationships with their peers, and have mixed feelings about the future. Based on this, we can integrate the idea of “lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets” into the curriculum system, encouraging teachers to put environmental protection elements into subjects such as history, geography, Chinese, and biology, or open elective courses on environmental protection to systematically lecture on ecological balance, resource recycling, etc., and allowing students to fully explore ecologically relevant theoretical knowledge in groups. Meanwhile, by organizing visits to sewage treatment plants, garbage classification demonstration sites and other on-site visits, we could educate students that environmental protection is not only a personal behavior, but also a concentration of social responsibility, politics and legal literacy.

At universities, by cultivating college students’ ecological values such as “sound ecological environment is the most inclusive benefits to people’s wellbeing”, we can help them establish the mission of “seeking the path of global eco-civilization construction together”. College students mature physically with a high metabolic rate. Their abstract thinking and dialectical thinking develop rapidly, so they can deeply understand and analyze complex problems. Their self-awareness continues to increase, and their emotions become richer and more complex. For them, eco-civilization education should be combined with theoretical teaching and value guidance. For example, the people-oriented idea of “sound ecological environment is the most inclusive benefits to people’s wellbeing” and the responsibility of “seeking the path of global eco-civilization construction together” should be integrated into ideological and political theory courses such as *Ideological and Moral Cultivation and Legal Literacy* and *Introduction to the Theoretical System of Mao Zedong Thought and Socialism with Chinese Characteristics* to guide them to deeply understand the protection of eco-civilization through a systematic explanation of the theoretical foundation, policy guidance and practical cases of eco-civilization construction. In addition, we can also organize practical classes, internship programs, international case analysis, international exchange, etc. for them to learn about the application of cutting-edge technologies in environmental protection, discuss global ecological and environmental issues with young men from all over the world, in a bid to help them master green skills and establish a global perspective.

5. Conclusion

This article conducts an in-depth discussion of the inheritance of traditions and innovation for integrating Xi Jinping Thought on Eco-Civilization into ideological and political education. It reveals the dialectic between adhering to traditional roots and making contemporary innovation. The article not only emphasizes the importance of adhering to the theoretical foundation of Marxism, inheriting the ecological philosophy in China’s fine traditional culture, and integrating local practice with global perspective, on the basis of which, it also proposes of using modern curriculum concepts to build a horizontal innovation path, and making targeted vertical innovation according to the different stages of adolescent growth. This research not only provides a new paradigm for

the integration of moral education systems in the new era, but also provides a more practical guidance for the comprehensive advancement of eco-civilization construction in the new era. Looking to the future, we must continue to carry out in-depth research in this field, and explore more broadly how ideological and political education can better promote green development and eco-civilization construction, in a bid to contribute to the construction of a Beautiful China by cultivating more successors in the new era.

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