

Article

# The Core Theses and Theoretical Logic of Ideological and Political Education in the Classic Works of Marx and Engels

Ping Qian <sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Marxism, Inner Mongolia Agricultural University, Hohhot, China

\* Correspondence: Ping Qian, School of Marxism, Inner Mongolia Agricultural University, Hohhot, China

**Abstract:** The core theses and theoretical logic of ideological and political education embedded within the classic texts of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels can be systematically summarized into three fundamental dimensions. First, these foundational works emphasize adhering strictly to the proletarian stance of Party spirit, or party-mindedness. This clarifies that ideological and political education inherently serves the broader proletarian revolutionary movement, consistently upholding the vanguard leadership of the Communist Party, and deeply relying on the mass line for sustained momentum. Second, the classic literature reveals that the essential function of such education lies in the concept of "theory gripping the masses," thereby transforming abstract philosophical thought into a tangible, revolutionary material force. Furthermore, its social origin is rooted in the historical materialist fact that material production and social intercourse fundamentally shape and change ideological concepts. Consequently, its ultimate historical mission is to realize a society where "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." Third, these texts establish critical methodological principles for educational practice. They take "real, active men" as the definitive logical starting point, adhering to the dialectical principle of transformation where "thought strives to realize itself" and "reality strives toward thought." This transformative process relies heavily on "those who wield practical force"---namely, the dedicated contingent of Communists---for effective implementation. Ultimately, these comprehensive theses provide a robust textual basis and enduring conceptual principles for advancing ideological and political education in the contemporary new era.

**Keywords:** ideological education; political education; marxist theory; human development; party spirit

## 1. Ideological and Value Education Should Maintain a People-Oriented and Practice-Based Perspective

### 1.1. *Serving Social Development and Human Well-Being*

Philosophical thought, as emphasized in foundational theoretical discussions, should be deeply intertwined with the practical needs and aspirations of society. This perspective underscores the transformative potential of ideas when they resonate with the lived experiences and collective goals of ordinary individuals [1]. By aligning philosophical inquiry with the pursuit of human emancipation and well-being, education can transcend abstract theorization and become a dynamic force for societal progress. Such an approach ensures that intellectual endeavors are not isolated from the realities of daily life but are instead actively contributing to the betterment of human conditions. This alignment between thought and practice is essential for fostering a more inclusive and equitable society, where the aspirations of all individuals are acknowledged and addressed in meaningful ways.

Ideological and value education, when oriented toward human development and societal advancement, holds the potential to significantly enhance the quality of life for individuals and communities. Its relevance is amplified when it addresses tangible social needs and encourages active participation in societal processes. By focusing on real-world

Received: 27 March 2026

Revised: 18 May 2026

Accepted: 29 May 2026

Published: 03 June 2026



**Copyright:** © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

challenges and opportunities, such education fosters a sense of social responsibility and empowers individuals to contribute meaningfully to collective progress [1]. The ultimate aim is to cultivate a society where equity, sustainability, and individual growth are prioritized. This requires a deliberate effort to integrate educational practices with the broader goals of social transformation, ensuring that learning is not only theoretical but also practical and impactful. Through this approach, education becomes a tool for nurturing well-rounded individuals who are equipped to navigate and improve the complexities of modern life.

As a comprehensive theoretical framework, Marxist thought provides valuable insights into the interplay between education, human development, and social transformation. It emphasizes the necessity of grounding educational initiatives in the practical realities of society and aligning them with the aspirations of the broader population. This perspective advocates for an education system that is not detached from the socio-economic and cultural contexts in which it operates but is instead deeply embedded within them [2]. By doing so, education can serve as a catalyst for meaningful change, addressing systemic inequalities and fostering a more just and harmonious society. The integration of theoretical principles with practical applications ensures that education remains relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of humanity, ultimately contributing to the creation of a more equitable and sustainable world.

### *1.2. The Importance of Organizational Guidance*

Marx and Engels underscored the importance of fostering workers' understanding of societal dynamics and historical evolution, emphasizing the transformative potential of education in shaping collective consciousness. This perspective highlights the necessity of structured educational initiatives aimed at cultivating critical awareness and a shared comprehension of social realities [3, 4]. By equipping individuals with the tools to analyze their circumstances, such efforts can empower them to actively engage in societal development and contribute to meaningful change. Furthermore, the integration of historical insights into educational frameworks can provide a foundation for understanding the interconnectedness of past and present, fostering a deeper appreciation of the forces shaping contemporary society.

Organizations dedicated to educational endeavors often possess unique strengths, including access to robust theoretical frameworks, accumulated practical expertise, and the capacity to mobilize collective efforts. These attributes enable them to bridge the gap between abstract concepts and tangible societal challenges, fostering a holistic approach to learning and action. Effective leadership within these organizations plays a pivotal role in aligning long-term developmental objectives with immediate social priorities, ensuring that educational initiatives remain relevant and impactful. By promoting informed participation in public discourse, such organizations contribute to the cultivation of a more engaged and critically aware citizenry, capable of addressing complex societal issues with nuanced understanding and collaborative effort [5].

Ideological and value-based education thrives under structured guidance that seamlessly integrates theoretical knowledge with practical application. This approach encourages learners to engage in critical reflection, enabling them to question assumptions and explore diverse perspectives. By fostering a culture of inquiry and dialogue, structured educational efforts can support the pursuit of shared social goals, emphasizing the importance of collective interests over individual aspirations. Additionally, the alignment of educational practices with broader societal objectives ensures that learners are equipped to contribute meaningfully to the advancement of their communities, promoting a harmonious balance between personal development and social progress [1, 6].

### *1.3. Adhering to a People-Centered Approach*

Marx emphasized the active role of people in shaping history and driving social development. Human beings are not passive observers of societal transformations; rather, they are the architects of social practices and institutions. This perspective underscores

the idea that ideas and ideologies gain tangible influence only when they are embraced, internalized, and applied by individuals in their daily lives. The transformative power of ideas lies in their practical application, which enables individuals to contribute meaningfully to the evolution of society. By recognizing the agency of people, this approach highlights the dynamic interplay between individual actions and broader societal changes, fostering a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that drive progress [1].

As societies grow more interconnected and their activities become increasingly intricate, the active involvement of the public assumes greater significance. The collective experiences, knowledge, and practical contributions of individuals play a pivotal role in advancing social progress and enriching cultural development [7]. Educational frameworks must therefore prioritize the inclusion of diverse perspectives and acknowledge the capacity of individuals to comprehend, interpret, and reshape their social realities. This participatory approach not only empowers individuals but also strengthens the social fabric by fostering a sense of shared responsibility and mutual understanding. By valuing public engagement, educational initiatives can better address the complexities of modern society and promote a more inclusive and adaptive approach to development.

A people-centered approach to ideological and value education places a strong emphasis on addressing real-life concerns, responding to societal needs, and encouraging active participation. This approach advocates for educational initiatives that draw upon the lived experiences and collective wisdom of various social groups. By doing so, it fosters an environment of cooperation, shared responsibility, and sustainable development. Such an approach not only enhances the relevance of education but also ensures that it remains responsive to the evolving needs of society. By promoting active engagement and collaboration, this framework seeks to cultivate a more informed, responsible, and participatory citizenry capable of contributing to long-term societal progress.

## **2. The Essential Function, Social Foundation, and Fundamental Mission of Ideological and Value Education**

### *2.1. The Essential Function of Ideological and Value Education*

After completing his critique of religion and speculative philosophy, Marx emphasized that genuine social transformation requires more than intellectual critique or abstract theorization. He argued that meaningful change must be rooted in practical activity that directly addresses the material and social conditions of human existence. This perspective underscores the importance of connecting theoretical reflection with tangible social practice, as theory gains its true significance only when it contributes to the betterment of human life and society [8]. By advocating for the integration of thought and action, Marx highlighted the necessity of aligning intellectual endeavors with efforts to resolve real-world challenges. This approach not only bridges the gap between abstract ideas and practical realities but also ensures that intellectual pursuits serve as catalysts for societal progress and human development. Thus, the interplay between critical thought and practical engagement becomes a cornerstone for fostering transformative change.

The essential function of ideological and value education lies in fostering a harmonious integration of knowledge, values, and practical application. Rather than being confined to theoretical exploration, this form of education seeks to empower individuals with the ability to comprehend complex social realities, critically assess prevailing conditions, and actively contribute to constructive societal development. By cultivating these capacities, ideological and value education plays a pivotal role in transforming abstract ideas into actionable strategies that promote both personal growth and collective progress. Educational activities, therefore, serve as a bridge between intellectual understanding and practical implementation, enabling individuals to align their personal aspirations with broader societal goals. This process not only enhances

individual agency but also strengthens the social fabric by encouraging active participation in addressing shared challenges [9]. Ultimately, the transformative potential of ideological and value education lies in its ability to inspire individuals to become agents of positive change, fostering a society that values critical thinking, ethical responsibility, and collaborative progress.

### *2.2. The Social Foundation of Ideological and Value Education*

Marx and Engels highlighted the intrinsic connection between material life and human consciousness, emphasizing that as individuals engage in productive activities and social interactions, they simultaneously reshape their thought processes and the ideas they generate [10]. This dynamic interplay suggests that transformations in social and economic conditions often lead to corresponding shifts in values, beliefs, and cultural perspectives. The evolution of human consciousness is not static but is deeply influenced by the material realities of life, which serve as the foundation for intellectual and ideological development. As societies progress, the relationship between material production and intellectual creation becomes increasingly complex, reflecting the multifaceted nature of human development.

Human beings function as both creators and consumers of material and intellectual resources, highlighting the dual role they play in societal advancement. Development is not limited to fulfilling physical needs; it also encompasses the pursuit of meaning, values, and cultural expression. As societies grow more intricate, the processes involved in generating and disseminating knowledge, ideas, and cultural artifacts become specialized, exerting significant influence on collective and individual consciousness. This specialization underscores the importance of intellectual resources in shaping societal norms and values, as well as the ways in which individuals interpret their roles within the broader social framework. The interplay between material and intellectual dimensions of life is thus a cornerstone of human progress.

Ideological and value education arises from the intersection of social development and intellectual activity, serving as a mechanism through which individuals acquire conceptual tools to navigate societal changes. This form of education equips people with the ability to critically assess social values, develop personal perspectives, and adapt to the evolving social environment. By engaging in educational processes, individuals enhance their capacity to interpret experiences, establish value orientations, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. The role of ideological education extends beyond mere knowledge dissemination; it fosters a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between societal structures and personal development, enabling individuals to actively participate in shaping the cultural and intellectual landscape of their societies.

### *2.3. The Fundamental Mission of Ideological and Value Education*

Marx and Engels emphasized the centrality of human development as a key objective of social progress. They argued that the growth of individuals is intrinsically linked to the advancement of society as a whole. This perspective underscores the idea that personal freedom and collective well-being are not opposing forces but are instead mutually reinforcing. The development of individuals contributes to the enrichment of society, while a thriving society provides the conditions necessary for individuals to achieve their full potential. This interconnected relationship highlights the importance of fostering an environment where both personal and societal growth can coexist harmoniously, ensuring that neither is pursued at the expense of the other [11].

From this theoretical foundation, the primary mission of ideological and value education emerges as the promotion of the comprehensive development of individuals. This involves equipping individuals with the intellectual tools, ethical principles, and social awareness necessary to engage meaningfully in societal life. Educational initiatives should aim to cultivate critical thinking, moral discernment, and a sense of responsibility toward the broader community. By fostering these qualities, education can empower individuals to make informed decisions, contribute constructively to social discourse, and

navigate the complexities of modern life with confidence and integrity. Furthermore, the cultivation of independent judgment is essential for enabling individuals to critically evaluate information, challenge biases, and develop a nuanced understanding of the world around them.

In addition to personal growth, ideological and value education seeks to create conditions that enable individuals to contribute positively to the collective well-being of society. This involves fostering a culture of cooperation, mutual respect, and shared responsibility. By emphasizing these values, education can help individuals recognize the interconnectedness of their actions and the broader social fabric. Such an approach not only supports personal fulfillment but also promotes sustainable social development. Ultimately, the dual objectives of advancing individual potential and fostering collective progress form the cornerstone of ideological and value education [12]. This dual focus ensures that education serves as a transformative force, bridging the gap between personal aspirations and societal needs, thereby contributing to a harmonious and progressive social order.

### **3. Methodological Principles of Ideological and Value Education**

Marx and Engels developed a comprehensive methodological framework for ideological and value education, which remains highly relevant in understanding the interplay between ideas and social structures. This framework begins with the premise that real individuals, engaged in tangible and practical activities, form the foundation of any ideological system. By focusing on the lived experiences of individuals, this approach ensures that ideological education is grounded in reality rather than abstract theorization. Furthermore, it emphasizes the dynamic interaction between ideas and social reality, suggesting that ideas are not static but evolve in response to changing societal conditions. This principle underscores the importance of adaptability in educational objectives, ensuring that they remain aligned with the needs of society. Additionally, the framework highlights the critical role of individuals and organizations in translating abstract values into actionable practices. These entities serve as the bridge between theoretical principles and their practical application, ensuring that ideological education has a tangible impact on society. Together, these principles address three core questions: the nature of social reality and how it should be understood, the methods through which educational objectives can be effectively achieved, and the identification of those responsible for implementing these educational strategies. By integrating these elements, the framework provides a robust foundation for fostering ideological and value education that is both practical and transformative.

#### *3.1. The Logical Starting Point: Real Individuals in Practical Activity*

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels emphasized the importance of grounding social analysis in the tangible realities of human existence, focusing on real individuals, their activities, and the material conditions shaping their lives. This approach underscores the dynamic role of human beings as active participants in societal processes, where their lived experiences, actions, and interactions collectively form the basis for social development. By prioritizing the concrete over the abstract, this perspective challenges traditional methodologies that rely on theoretical assumptions detached from the realities of human life. It advocates for a framework that recognizes the interplay between individual agency and broader societal structures, thereby fostering a more nuanced understanding of social dynamics. Such an approach is particularly relevant in the context of ideological and value education, where the emphasis on real-life conditions can enhance the relevance and impact of educational practices. By aligning educational theory with the lived realities of learners, educators can create environments that are more responsive to individual needs and aspirations. This people-centered orientation not only respects the autonomy of learners but also encourages active participation, critical thinking, and meaningful engagement. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of addressing diverse experiences and perspectives, ensuring that educational initiatives are

inclusive and adaptable to varying contexts. Ultimately, this approach aims to cultivate a deeper connection between learners and the material realities of their lives, promoting personal development and fostering a sense of agency within the broader social framework [13].

This perspective establishes a foundational principle for ideological and value education, advocating for a people-centered approach that prioritizes the lived experiences and aspirations of individuals. Educational theory and practice, when grounded in the realities of human life, can better address the diverse needs and challenges faced by learners. Recognizing individuals as active participants rather than passive recipients of knowledge transforms the educational process into a dynamic interaction, where learners engage critically with content and develop a deeper understanding of their social environment. This approach encourages educators to design curricula and methodologies that are responsive to the evolving material conditions and social contexts of learners, fostering adaptability and relevance in educational practices. By emphasizing the active role of individuals, ideological and value education can promote critical thinking, self-reflection, and personal growth, enabling learners to navigate complex societal challenges effectively. Moreover, this orientation supports the cultivation of a sense of agency and empowerment, encouraging individuals to contribute meaningfully to social development. It also underscores the importance of inclusivity, ensuring that educational initiatives accommodate diverse perspectives and experiences, thereby enriching the learning process. Ultimately, this people-centered approach seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, fostering a holistic understanding of societal dynamics and empowering individuals to actively shape their social realities.

### *3.2. The Principle of Transformation: Connecting Ideas and Reality*

Marx emphasized that ideas, while powerful, cannot independently transform society unless they are intricately connected with the prevailing social conditions and accompanied by practical action. This underscores the dynamic interplay between abstract thought and tangible reality. Social conditions, in turn, generate the need for new ideas, values, and frameworks of understanding, creating a reciprocal relationship between theory and practice [6]. This principle highlights the necessity of grounding theoretical insights in the lived experiences of individuals and communities, ensuring that ideas remain relevant and actionable. By fostering this connection, societies can better address their evolving challenges and aspirations, ensuring that intellectual progress aligns with practical advancements.

From the perspective of ideological and value education, the principle of connecting conceptual understanding with practical engagement is particularly significant. Educational activities should not merely focus on the transmission of knowledge and values in isolation but should actively encourage learners to apply these principles in real-world scenarios. This approach ensures that education becomes a transformative process, equipping individuals with the tools to navigate and contribute meaningfully to their social environments. Furthermore, educational content must remain adaptable, reflecting the dynamic nature of societal realities and the emergence of new human needs. By doing so, education can maintain its relevance and efficacy, fostering a generation of individuals who are both intellectually informed and practically competent.

The effectiveness of educational ideas is intrinsically linked to their relevance to people's lived experiences and their capacity to address pressing practical concerns. Theories in education gain traction and influence when they offer insightful explanations of social phenomena and provide actionable guidance for human development [14]. This underscores the importance of integrating theoretical reflection with practical application in the realm of ideological and value education. By promoting a continuous dialogue between abstract ideas and concrete realities, education can serve as a bridge that connects intellectual exploration with societal progress. This dynamic interplay ensures that

education remains a vital force for individual and collective growth, fostering a harmonious balance between thought and action.

### *3.3. The Implementing Subjects: Individuals Capable of Translating Values into Practice*

In The Holy Family, it is argued that ideas attain practical significance only when they are actively realized through the efforts of individuals. Values, principles, and educational objectives, while inherently meaningful, require human agency to transition from theoretical constructs into impactful societal forces. This transformation occurs when individuals interpret these ideas, effectively communicate them, and implement them within the context of practical activities. Without such active engagement, even the most profound ideas risk remaining abstract and disconnected from real-world applications.

The success of ideological and value education is intrinsically linked to the individuals and organizations tasked with its execution [15]. Educators, scholars, community leaders, and other practitioners serve as the conduits through which educational principles are translated into tangible learning experiences. Their professional expertise, ethical dedication, and capacity to address the complexities of social realities are critical determinants of the effectiveness of educational initiatives. These individuals not only disseminate knowledge but also inspire learners to internalize and apply these values in their personal and communal lives, thereby fostering a more cohesive and progressive society.

Educational practitioners must possess a multifaceted skill set that extends beyond subject-specific knowledge. They need to communicate ideas with clarity and empathy, understand the evolving needs of society, and encourage active and constructive participation among learners [15]. By doing so, they bridge the gap between abstract educational values and their practical application. Through their dedicated efforts, these values are transformed into actionable resources that promote individual development and contribute to broader social progress. This dynamic process underscores the pivotal role of educators and other practitioners in shaping a society that values growth, inclusivity, and collective well-being.

## **4. Conclusion**

The preceding discussion provides a foundational interpretation of several pivotal propositions concerning ideological and value education as articulated in the classical works of Marx and Engels. By analyzing these texts through an educational lens, this study underscores the intricate interplay between human development, social practice, and educational activity. Such an approach highlights the transformative potential of education in shaping individuals who are not only intellectually enriched but also socially conscious and practically engaged. The exploration of these classical theories reveals their enduring relevance, particularly in addressing contemporary challenges in education. For instance, the emphasis on the dialectical relationship between individual growth and collective societal progress offers a robust framework for rethinking educational objectives in a rapidly changing world. Furthermore, this perspective invites educators and policymakers to critically evaluate the role of education in fostering equity, inclusivity, and active citizenship. By situating education within the broader context of social dynamics, this analysis provides a compelling argument for integrating theoretical insights with practical applications to achieve holistic human development.

Revisiting classical theoretical resources serves as a valuable endeavor for advancing contemporary educational research and practice. These foundational ideas, centered on human development, practical engagement, and social responsibility, offer profound implications for designing educational systems that prioritize the cultivation of informed, responsible, and actively engaged citizens. By emphasizing the interconnectedness of individual agency and collective well-being, ideological and value education can provide a guiding framework for addressing pressing global issues such as inequality, environmental sustainability, and social cohesion. This approach encourages the development of curricula that not only impart knowledge but also foster critical thinking,

ethical reasoning, and a commitment to societal improvement. Moreover, the integration of these principles into educational practices can inspire innovative pedagogical strategies that bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and real-world application. Future research could explore the practical implementation of these ideas across diverse educational contexts, examining their impact on student outcomes and societal progress. Such investigations would further illuminate the transformative potential of education as a tool for fostering a more equitable and sustainable future.

## References

1. J. Wang, "Analysis of challenges and countermeasures of ideological and political education in colleges and universities in the new era," *J. High. Educ. Res.*, vol. 2, no. 6, p. 35, 2021.
2. Z. Lv, C. Zhou, and C. Zhou, "Design and implementation of ideological and political education evaluation system," in *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, vol. 1176, no. 4, p. 042067, Mar. 2019.
3. E. H. DeBray, \*Politics, ideology, and education\*. Teachers College Press, 2006.
4. F. Chen, "Study on ideological and political education," in *International Conference on Education, Management and Information Technology*, Oct. 2015, pp. 243–247.
5. X. Liu, Z. Xiantong, and H. Starkey, "Ideological and political education in Chinese Universities: structures and practices," *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 586–598, 2023.
6. G. Liu, "The ways and methods of ideological and political education for postgraduates," *Advances in Educational Technology and Psychology*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 80–87, 2021.
7. J. Zhang, "Innovative Pedagogical Approaches in University Ideological and Political Education," *International Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 127, p. 63626, 2024.
8. Z. Hu and J. Li, "Innovative methods for ideological and political education of college students," *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, vol. 18, no. 5, 2018.
9. H. Deng, "Network ideological and political education of college and research analysis," *Advanced Materials Research*, vol. 971, pp. 2591–2594, 2014.
10. J. Fien, "Ideology, political education and teacher education: matching paradigms and models," *J. Curriculum Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 239–256, 1991.
11. L. Li, "Teaching of ideological and political education for college students from the perspective of culture," *DEStech Transactions on Social Science Education and Human Science*, vol. 1, pp. 656–661, 2017.
12. G. Zhu and T. Tao, "Strategies for ideological and political education in colleges and universities from the perspective of general education," *Academic Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, vol. 4, no. 11, pp. 18–23, 2021.
13. G. Zheng, "Construction of ideological and political education in universities based on intelligent digital education," *Advances in Educational Technology and Psychology*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 45–54, 2024.
14. H. Chen and Y. Zhang, "Exploration of the value of current ideological and political education in the context of great ideological and political views," *Journal of Art, Culture and Philosophical Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2024.
15. X. Han, "Innovative methods of ideological and political education: the combination of theory and practice," *Adult and Higher Education*, vol. 5, no. 20, pp. 29–35, 2023.

**Disclaimer/Publisher's Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of Publisher and/or the editor(s). Publisher and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.