

On the Strategic Dimension and Practical Enlightenment of Deng Xiaoping's Thought of Democratic and Legal Educational

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Abstract

Deng Xiaoping democratic legal educational thought is an important part of Deng Xiaoping Theory. From the perspectives of historical experience, political situation of stability and unity, and the construction of spiritual civilization, it elaborates democratic legal education, and highlights Deng Xiaoping's profound thought on the fundamental strategic significance of democratic legal education, which has a important and far-reaching practical significance to establish today's socialist core values, to construct a country ruled by law and to cultivate successors and builders for the socialist cause.

Key words: Deng Xiaoping; Democratic legal education; Strategy; Practical enlightenment

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INTRODUCTION

In the late 1970s, after Deng Xiaoping's comeback, based on the lessons learned from our country's democratic and legal construction, he has creatively put forward the

socialist democratic and legal theory, and has made a comprehensive and systematic interpretation for socialist democratic and socialist legal theories. Deng Xiaoping democratic legal thought which contains a lot of thinking about democratic and legal education is an important part of Deng Xiaoping Theory. Deng Xiaoping democratic legal educational thought has discussed democratic and legal education from the strategic dimension of historic experience and socialist construction practices, and has examined democratic and legal education from the perspective of the Party and the country's fate, which has an overall, directional, and predictable strategic significance, and also has a significant and profound practical enlightenment for today's socialist development.

1. THE STRATEGIC DIMENSION OF DENG XIAOPING DEMOCRATIC LEGAL EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT

The term of strategy originally refers to the combat resourcefulness, later gradually has extended to refer to the fundamental guiding plan under a certain historical period. Deng Xiaoping democratic legal educational thought is the brilliant summary of Deng Xiaoping's attitude on democratic legal education, which breaks through the democratic and legal educational process, examines democratic legal education from the perspective of the fate of the Party and the country, and throughout the course of socialist democratic legal educational construction. It is expressed mainly in three strategic dimensions.

1.1 To View the Democratic and Legal Education From the Perspective of Historical Experience

In order to avoid the repetition of historical tragedy such as the "Cultural Revolution", Deng Xiaoping has called on and put forward socialist democracy and improved

socialist legal system. He has attributed the biggest mistake after a decade of reform and opening up since the political turmoil in 1989 to education, especially the ideological and political education. Deng Xiaoping has examined the democratic and legal education from the strategic height of China's democratic and legal tradition summary, the lessons of the Cultural Revolution, and a decade of experience in reform and opening up.

Deng Xiaoping has pointed out that China lacks democratic and legal tradition, and the publicity for democracy and legislation is not enough. From a historical development point of view, China is a long-term feudal society. The political philosophy of feudal imperial autocracy determines that there is only the rule by men, not the rule of law. As Deng Xiaoping has said, in traditional Chinese society, democratic and legal tradition is very few, but feudal autocratic tradition is too much. In the first few years since the founding of the country, our Party's recognition of democracy and legislation is still very clear. For example, the resolution of the eighth Party congress has stressed that with the arrival of socialist construction period, it should get started to develop a more complete legal system, and gradually improve the country's all systems. However, later the concept of democracy and legislation was regarded as the bourgeois rightist rhetoric and was vigorously criticized. The construction of legislation had to halt. Especially the ten years' turmoil of the "Cultural Revolution" severely trampled democracy and legislation, and promoted the rule by men. In the early 1980s, *The Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of our Party since the Founding of People's Republic of China* which has been formed under the auspice of Deng Xiaoping has made a very deep analysis on the lessons of rule by men in the Cultural Revolution: due to a variety of historical reasons that "we did not bring the Party inner democracy and the democracy of national political and social life to be institutionalized and legalized, or though we have enacted laws, which have no proper authority."¹ Namely, on the one hand, Party inner democracy and the democracy of national political social life lack institutions or laws to keep them stable, on the other hand, even with the laws as a norm, in people's minds they have no proper prestige, and are not given due attention. Therefore, the occurrence and development of the Cultural Revolution are difficult to prevent and stop. Judging from historical conditions, China lacks democratic and legal tradition. At the same time, Deng Xiaoping has held that the Party and the state do not give enough publicity to the democratic and legal theories and practices.

Deng Xiaoping pointed out that the biggest mistake in the decade of reform and opening up was education,

mainly the ideological and political education. Deng Xiaoping has made a brilliant summary to the political turmoil in 1989, regarding this storm was going to come sooner or later. The biggest mistake in the decade of reform and opening up was education, mainly the ideological and political education. Since the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee, a handful of people in the society used the name of "emancipating the mind" to advocate democracy, freedom and human rights of the West, to deny the socialist system, and to attack the four cardinal principles. With the gradual deepening of reform and opening up, Western thoughts such as Sartre's "Existentialism" and Freud's "Psychoanalytic Theory," etc., flew into our country. Bourgeois liberalization trend is flooded in China. Some students even spread the wrong arguments such as "democracy is egoism, freedom is the arbitrariness, ideal is self-realization, and future is self-design." (Zhang, 2006) International hostile forces stepped up the peaceful evolution which formed the "macroclimate", and the fundamental problem of the weak domestic ideological and political fronts was not resolved which formed the "microclimate". The overlapped two climates led to the outbreak of the political turmoil in 1989. For the effects of two climates at home and abroad and the weaknesses of ideological and political education, Deng Xiaoping deeply realized the "lifeline" role of ideological and political education. Thus, to educate and guide people to correctly understand the relationship between discipline and freedom, between democracy and legislation, and to correct the mistake of democratic and legal education seems to be particularly important.

1.2 To View the Democratic and Legal Education From the Height of the Political Stability and Unity

Discipline and order are the guarantee for the construction of modernization. Without political stability and unity, nothing can be achieved. Deng Xiaoping has discussed democratic and legal education from the strategic height of ensuring political stability and achieving socialist modernization.

Deng Xiaoping has stressed that the emphasis lied in clarifying the issue of democracy to the people. "To mobilize the enthusiasm is the largest democracy", (*The Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, 1993, p.242) which was Deng Xiaoping's plain and simple expression for democracy. When talked about political reform, he held simplification of troops and administration, decentralization, and mobilization of enthusiasm was the main content. On the other hand, the construction of modernization also required a stable, unified, and lively political situation. During the Cultural Revolution period the so-called "great democracy" was mistakenly regarded as the expression of democracy. People did not express criticism and suggestions through a proper method or

¹ *Selected Documents of CPC Central Committee*. (1992, p.176). Beijing, China: Central Party School Press.

channel, instead used the methods such as “speaking out freely, arising views fully, putting up big-character posters and holding great debates” which intensified social unrest. Deng Xiaoping classified “great democracy” as anarchism and extreme individualism which should be resolutely opposed. In Deng Xiaoping’s speech of *Four Cardinal Principles*, he has clearly answered the question that what kind of democracy did the Chinese people need, that is, socialist democracy or the people’s democracy. This kind of democracy is essentially different from bourgeois democracy, and definitely not the bourgeois individual democracy. Democracy to the people cannot be separated from dictatorship to the enemy, and the people’s democracy cannot be separated from centralism on the base of democracy. Therefore, to create a good political situation of stability and unity, we must make people understand the relationship between the four cardinal principles and democracy, the relationship between democracy and centralism, and the relationship between freedom and discipline, in other words, we must clarify the nature of democracy to the people.

Deng Xiaoping pointed out that to achieve stability and unity, education was indispensable. How to ensure the country’s long-term stability, the system was a fundamental guarantee. Deng Xiaoping has already realized this and has repeatedly stressed the important role of the system. In August 1980 when Deng Xiaoping was asked by an Italian reporter that how to avoid the occurrence of terrible things such as the “Cultural Revolution,” Deng clearly pointed out that to begin with the system reform, namely, the key to resolve going backward to “Cultural Revolution” was to seriously begin to establish a sound socialist democratic system and socialist legal system. Therefore, socialist democracy and legislation are the necessary guarantee to ensure the political situation of stability and unity. Thus, Deng Xiaoping in various important occasions, to different groups, has repeatedly stressed the need to strengthen legal education and discipline education to the people of the whole society. On December 28, 1977 at the meeting of Central Military Commission he pointed out that the army must be enforced with strict discipline, “one point is obedience to orders in all actions, and another is the willing observance of discipline. We should strengthen this aspect of education.” (*The Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, 1994, p.82) In the end of 1980 in the CPC central committee work conference Deng Xiaoping emphasized that we must strengthen discipline education and legal education in the Party and government organs of the state, the people’s army, enterprises, schools at all levels and all the people, otherwise it would not be possible to build socialism and to achieve modernization. From the above discussions it can be seen that democratic legal education and democratic legal construction are the important guarantee for the formation of the political situation of stability and unity.

1.3 To View Democratic and Legal Education From the Height of the Construction of Socialist Spiritual Civilization

The cultivation of the “four have” people who have lofty Ideals, moral integrity, good education, and a strong sense of discipline is the core task for the construction of socialist spiritual civilization. Deng Xiaoping’s cultivation of “four have” people is to examine democratic and legal education from the strategic dimension of the construction of socialist spiritual civilization.

Deng Xiaoping’s cultivation of the “four have” people who should have lofty Ideals, moral integrity, good education, and a strong sense of discipline is the fundamental and critical point for the construction of socialist spiritual civilization. In December 1980 at the CPC Central Committee work conference Deng Xiaoping pointed out that the building of a socialist country required a high degree of material civilization and spiritual civilization. In April 1983 at the meeting with the central delegation of India Communist Party Deng Xiaoping has further defined the construction of socialist spiritual civilization, namely, in the process of building a socialist spiritual civilization, to cultivate the people with the communist ideals, morality, education, and discipline was the essential task. In the Party’s first programmatic document on socialist spirit construction – *Resolution of the CPC Central Committee on the Guiding Principles for the Construction of Socialist Spiritual Civilization* which has been passed in the 6th Plenary Session of the 12th Party Central Committee, the cultivation of “four have” people has been given an important position from the policy level of the Party and the state. To cultivate the socialist citizens with lofty Ideals, moral integrity, good education, and a strong sense of discipline is the fundamental task for the construction of socialist spiritual civilization.

The fundamental task for the construction of spiritual civilization is to cultivate the “four have” new people. “Having a sense of discipline” is the assurance for socialist citizens to achieve “four have”, and the discipline and legal education determines whether the fundamental task for the construction of socialist spiritual civilization can be really realized. “Four have” is an organic unity, within which lofty ideals is the essence, moral integrity is the foundation, good education is the condition, and a sense of discipline is the guarantee. Deng Xiaoping called on “four have” and “four have” education, with special emphasis on ideals and discipline, as well as the ideal education and discipline education, and pointed out that the ideal and discipline education should be carried out firstly to the youth. In December 1987 Deng Xiaoping met with the former US President Jimmy Carter. When the talks came to China’s democracy and legal system in the political reform, Deng Xiaoping pointed out that while the Party and government were stressing the development of democracy, it would also emphasize that the people, especially the youth should have lofty ideals and the sense

of discipline. Here the discipline referred to the laws, and discipline education was in the essence legal education. Deng Xiaoping said that the Party discipline required each communist party member to comply with the laws, and whether a person was a Party member or not, he must comply with the laws. Not only Party members, but also workers, peasants, students and people in all other industries needed to strengthen the discipline education and legal education. In addition, the education of democratic and legal concept itself was an important part of the ideological and moral construction. The resolution made in the 6th Plenary Session of the 4th Party Central Committee has proposed that one of the main objectives for the construction of spiritual civilization in the next 15 years was to significantly improve the quality of citizens in the fields of ideological and moral cultivation, scientific and educational level, and democratic and legal concept. This also confirmed Deng Xiaoping's thought of democratic and legal education.

2. THE PRACTICAL ENLIGHTENMENT OF DENG XIAOPING THOUGHT OF DEMOCRATIC AND LEGAL EDUCATION

Since the 3rd Plenary Session of the 11th Party Central Committee, based on the analysis of major issues in history and reality, Deng Xiaoping has shown the thought of viewing democratic legal education from the strategic dimension of conclusion of historical lessons, political situation of stability and unity as well as the construction of socialist spiritual civilization. Today, China is at the important historical period to comprehensively deepen reforms and to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, Deng Xiaoping's thought of democratic and legal education still has a significant and profound practical enlightenment to us.

2.1 The Democratic and Legal Education Is China's Basic Project

Deng Xiaoping on the one hand highlighted the basic position of democratic legal education in the democratic and legal construction, on the other hand, he confirmed the role of democracy and legal system as a protection for building the socialist political situation of stability and unity. As early as in 1978, Deng Xiaoping has asserted that, "democracy has to be institutionalized and legalized. To make the system and laws do not change because of changes in the leadership, not to change because of changes in the views and attentions of the leaders." (*The Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, 1993, p.146) This proposition has been extended to today. It can be seen that there is no change in the concept of ruling a nation according to law, and the road of legal construction goes toward firmness.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the general secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out many times in his

speeches: To stick to ruling the country by law. Rule by law and administration by law should be promoted jointly. To uphold the integrated construction of country ruled by law, government governed by law and society ruled by law. The era proposition of "ruling China in accordance with law" has also been proposed. *The Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening Reform* which has been passed in the 3rd Plenary Session of the 18th Party Central Committee uses a special chapter to elaborate how to promote the construction of ruling China by law. What kind of ruling China by law do we need, and how to build ruling China by law is the theoretical and practical issue which must be addressed. The development of democratic and legal education is one of the ways to solve the practical question of how to build ruling China by law. Ruling China by law is a comprehensive and systematic project. Scientific legislation, strict law enforcement, fair justice, and law-abiding of the whole nation as subsystems of the integrated system of ruling China by law, interrelate and influence with each other, each of which is an indispensable part. Only when rule by law becomes the faith and reverence in people's heart, "law-abiding of the whole nation" cannot be just a slogan, can get down to earth and win support from the people. The people are the foundation for the construction of ruling China by law. Through democratic and legal education, we should make every ordinary people really study law, respect law, observe law, and use law, make socialist legal spirit go deeply into the heart of people so as to lay a solid social foundation for building ruling China by law.

2.2 The Democratic and Legal Education Is an Important Means to Cultivate Socialist Core Values

Deng Xiaoping attached great importance to the ideological and moral construction, and often highlighted in various speeches the strategic role of spiritual civilization construction to the cause of building socialism. Presently, the Party and government advocate to nurture and implement the socialist core values, which is exactly the major strategic task of promoting the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics and realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation from the ideological and spiritual aspects.

Opinions on Cultivating and Practicing Socialist Core Values issued by CPC Central Committee on December 23rd, 2013 pointed out that, from the basic content point of view, socialist core values related to the sum of three dimensions of values: The state, society and citizen individuals, that is to say, prosperity, democracy, civilization and harmony is the value objective at the state level, freedom, equality, justice, and rule by law is the value orientation at the social level, and patriotism, dedication, integrity, and kindness is the value standard at the individual level. Xi Jinping commented this as,

“this conclusion actually answers the major questions that what kind of country and society we will build, what kind of citizen we will cultivate.”² To cultivate the educatee’s correct understanding on the value orientation of democracy, freedom, equality, justice, and rule by law is one of the tasks for democratic and legal education, which is also the convergence between democratic legal education and socialist core values. In order to integrate the nurturance and practice of socialist core values into the whole process of national education, school education with the content of socialist democracy and legal system, social education and self-education may act as one of the important means. Therefore, to enhance democratic and legal education to the whole nation, especially pay attention to the youth and leading cadres, it can play a good demonstrative role in developing socialist core values in the whole society.

2.3 Democratic and Legal Education Is the Important Measure to Cultivate Successors and Builders for the Socialist Cause

Emphasis on democratic and legal education to the youth is a major feature of Deng Xiaoping’s thought of democratic and legal education, because “the growth of the young generation is the hope to ensure the prosperity of our cause.” (*The Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, 1994, p.319) To cultivate qualified builders and reliable successors for the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics is the important task for the great cause. However, international and domestic situations change profoundly. On the one hand, there are sharp struggles with international hostile forces in the field of ideology, as well as influences by a large number of Western social thoughts, values and lifestyle. On the other hand, negative phenomena in domestic legal construction become prominent. Bad social atmosphere spreads. Selectivity, changeableness, and contradictoriness of young people grow. To cultivate the youth with excellent democratic and legal quality is still a long-term and arduous task.

The democratic and legal quality of the youth, especially which of college students, in a sense may reflect the civilization degree of social development, which also relates to success or failure of the socialist cause with Chinese characteristics. In recent years, problems in relation to the democratic and legal quality of the youth have become increasingly prominent, such as: the proportion of crimes among college students has improved. A variety of criminal cases have caused widespread concerns and reflections in society. These cases have shown the psychological problems of some college students, and have also shown that college students’ legal concept was rather indifferent, boundary between

crime and non-crime was vague, and professionalism and legal quality was incompatible to each other. According to the survey, the desire for democracy of the majority of college students is incompatible to their perception of democracy. Blind group psychology is prevalent. Democracy enthusiasm and democratic participation are uncoordinated. Democratic practices are deficient. Poor understanding on the relationship connotation of “democracy is the foundation of legal system, legal system is the protection of democracy” is prominent, which is likely to result in a lack of force with democratic participation spirits for the reform of political system. A more obvious phenomenon is that, for those investigated and punished officers who have committed corruption, most of who have received good higher education in their youth, or even graduated from prestigious universities, indicating that in the critical period when their outlook on the world, life and values have been formed, there were no persistent and deep democratic and legal education given to them, resulting in the deficiency of the leading cadres’ awareness of discipline and law. Democratic and legal quality is an important part of the overall quality of the youth. The effectiveness of democratic and legal education determines the level of democratic and legal quality of the youth, and is also related to the success of talent cultivation for the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Therefore, we must strengthen democratic and legal education so as to cultivate successors and builders for the socialist cause.

CONCLUSION

Throughout Deng Xiaoping’s thought of democracy and legal education, his thinking in strategic dimension has been reflected everywhere. Currently, the 4th Plenary Session of the 18th Party Central Committee has passed *Decisions on Some Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Promoting Governing the Country by Law*, and has located law-abiding of the whole nation as the long term basic work for governing the country by law. Deng Xiaoping’s strategic consideration of democratic and legal education can supply theoretical support and practical foundation for the democratic and legal education under the great background of comprehensively promoting governing the country by law, thus has a great theoretical and practical significance.

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² Collated documents of Liu Shaohua and Xi Jinping’s speeches on core values - The most lasting and deepest power. (2014, July 24). *People’s Daily Overseas Edition*, p.5.