

Five Characteristics of the Paradigm Shift in Moral Education Evaluation in China

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Abstract: Over the past forty years since the reform and opening up, China's moral education evaluation paradigm has experienced a historical evolution from the subjective experience paradigm to the scientific paradigm to the humanistic constructive paradigm. This paper mainly reflects on the scientism-oriented moral education evaluation paradigm and summarizes the five characteristics of its shift to humanistic construction, that is, the evaluation hypothesis from "objectivist epistemology" to "constructivism epistemology", the value basis from "monistic value" to "multiple value", evaluation criteria have moved from "quantitative and management-oriented criteria" to "qualitative and multi-subject needs-oriented criteria", the evaluation method has changed from "empirical method" to "construction method", and the evaluation result has changed from "identification" to "improvement".

"Paradigm" has been widely used in the field of natural sciences and humanities and social sciences since it was proposed by Thomas S. Kuhn, an American philosopher of science, in 1962. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, the word "paradigm" is used in as many as twenty-two ways^[1], such as calling paradigms patterns, examples, solutions, methods, beliefs, and so on. On the whole, Kuhn's "paradigm" mainly refers to a collection of beliefs, values, techniques and so on, which are commonly observed by a community, and are the theoretical basis and practical norms on which conventional science operates. Along this line of thought, the moral education evaluation paradigm is the common evaluation concept, value standard and model framework formed by the moral education evaluation community based on the essence, purpose and process of moral education evaluation.

Our moral education evaluation paradigm in general has experienced the development process of empiricist paradigm, scientific paradigm to humanistic constructive paradigm. Before the reform and opening up, moral evaluation is mainly made through the evaluator's observation of words and deeds, and judgment is made by virtue of one's own experience and feelings, and the evaluation of moral education in schools is also mainly based on behavioral comments. After the reform and opening up, people have questioned the traditional conduct evaluation method^[2], began to turn to the quantitative study of moral education evaluation, mainly on the moral education evaluation of the scientific issues explored^[3], trying to objectively evaluate the effect of moral education in schools. Moral education assessment, the scientization of moral education evaluation, the serialization of moral education work and other issues became the focus of the researchers at that time, moral education evaluation from the empirical evaluation to the quantitative evaluation.

However, scientific moral education evaluation did not distinguish between moral cognition and non-cognitive fields, nor did it distinguish between moral education activities and intellectual education activities, and the measurement and assessment methods adapted to natural sciences were completely applied to complex moral education evaluation activities, which severed the unity of knowledge evaluation and quality evaluation, and the unity of immediate evaluation and potential evaluation, and could not reasonably evaluate the effect of moral education.

After entering the 21st century, a series of policy documents, writings and papers on moral education evaluation began to pay attention to the problem of "human" in moral education evaluation, highlighting the humanistic and constructive nature of moral evaluation, and the paradigm of moral education evaluation began to shift to the "humanistic constructive" orientation. The humanistic constructive paradigm of moral evaluation takes advantage of the theory of multiple values, highlights the multi-subjective nature of evaluation, and advocates the use of a variety of ways to evaluate the effects of moral education. Under the humanistic constructive paradigm, it is believed that moral education evaluation should realize five changes in response to the shortcomings of the scientific paradigm, i.e., the evaluation assumption should be changed from "objectivist epistemology" to "constructivist epistemology", and the value basis should be changed from "monistic value" to "multiple value", evaluation criteria have moved from "quantitative and management-oriented criteria" to "qualitative and multi-subject needs-oriented criteria", evaluation methods have moved from "empirical methods" to "constructive methods"; and evaluation results have moved from "appraisal" to "improvement".

1. The evaluation hypothesis: from "objectivist epistemology" to "constructivist epistemology"

Since the 1990s, China's moral education evaluation is generally characterized by a scientific paradigm. The scientific evaluation paradigm believes in the existence of an objective entity that is not subject to people's subjective influence; it believes in objectivism on epistemology, emphasizing that it distances itself from the object of study in the process of understanding; on methodology, it attaches importance to quantitative and objective indexes, and makes a lot of use of methods of measurement and statistics. ^[4] The moral education evaluation under the scientific paradigm emphasizes the evaluation of the moral quality of the evaluated person through scores, with the aim of ranking and grading, evaluating prizes and merits, and identifying management. The assumption of this evaluation theory is the objectivist epistemology, and the moral education activity under the domination of the objectivist epistemology is regarded as an objective existence that is independent of the subject and can be recognized by the subject, and is the object of the evaluator's recognition and transformation. In other words, people can recognize and reveal the law of moral education activities through quantitative research, and then predict the educational activities. For example, colleges and universities focus on the ideological and political theory course examination results as the standard of evaluation ^[5], primary and secondary schools focus on the selection of standard test papers as the evaluation tool, and all school segments are pursuing the use of quantitative techniques to analyze and characterize the evaluation information and so on.

Evaluation theories that focus on "construction" are rooted in the philosophical paradigm of constructivism, adhere to the ontology, epistemology, and methodology of constructivism. ^[6] Constructivist evaluation theories are based on the concept of "constructivism", which is a philosophical paradigm of constructivism. ^[6] Constructivist theory holds that the basis of evaluation is personal experience and judgment, and the evaluation results are constructed by inter-subjects through mutual communication and negotiation, and that the ultimate purpose of evaluation is not to search for the so-called objective truth, but to continuously improve the ability of self-regulation, so

as to continuously adapt to the external environment. Therefore, the evaluation of moral education is no longer the subject of the "objective world" of objective measurement and causal revelation, but through the stakeholders in the existing experience on the basis of co-construction; the process is not to the evaluator's side of the dominant control, but the process of full participation of stakeholders; the results are no longer in order to the objective results of the appraisal of the management, but on the basis of equality, democracy, and consultation to find a way out of the situation. The result is no longer to identify and manage the objective results, but to seek reasonable evaluation conclusions on the basis of equality, democracy and consultation, and then really improve the effect of moral education evaluation.

2. The value basis: from "monist value" to "pluralistic value"

Generally speaking, the philosophical basis of value can be divided into two categories: value monism and value pluralism. Value monism firmly believes that there are certain universal values, and that universal values are more prioritized than specific values in a social community.

In traditional Chinese society, moral education has always been based on the value needs of the state and society, and the needs of the state and society are the purpose of moral education. The fundamental purpose of traditional moral education is to internalize the ideas, consciousness, and moral norms of the state and society into the beliefs, consciousness, and behavioral habits of the members of the society, and then to maintain the stability and development of the society. After the founding of The People's Republic of China, education was regarded as more of a national and social endeavor, and the social value of moral education was given more attention, resulting in the formation of social-oriented moral education values. Throughout the development of moral education evaluation in China, there is a common assumption that the value of moral education is monistic and definite. The philosophical basis of the monism of value is still the monism of scientism, which firmly believes in the existence of a universal value that exists objectively without any limitation of time and space. This theory of value provides standard normative guidelines for school administration and teachers. However, the value basis of monism inevitably produces a monistic evaluation standard, and the monistic value standard is inevitably determined by the dominant evaluation subject, thus, the moral education evaluation becomes the evaluation activity with the national education management department as the main body, and the value of the moral education evaluation becomes the monistic value of the education management subject to judge whether the moral education activity meets its own value needs. However, only a single subject to implement the evaluation, due to the single source of information channels and the evaluation of the subject's own understanding of the limitations of the evaluation results will inevitably affect the objectivity, authenticity and accuracy of the evaluation results. ^[7]

Since the 21st century, the international pluralistic values have been in constant collision and fusion. The domestic socialist market economy has stimulated the enthusiasm of many subjects and brought about diversified needs, and the moral education evaluation based on the monistic value theory has been challenged by diversified values. In this context, the value basis of moral education evaluation has shifted from the administrative subject's monistic value to the multi-subject's pluralistic value, and moral education evaluation has gradually become a process of mutual "negotiation" to reach a common construction based on the pluralistic value demands of the state, the government, the school and the students and other stakeholders. This concept of multiple values reflecting the needs of different subjects breaks the evaluation mode dominated by the government and its agents, and includes students and other stakeholders in the evaluation subject, so that the reasonable value needs of the relevant stakeholders have been paid attention to and respected.

3. Evaluation standard: from "quantitative and management-oriented standard" to "qualitative and multi-subject demand-oriented standard"

The evaluation standard of moral education under the scientific paradigm has two main characteristics: first, it relies too much on quantification and takes quantitative indexes as the only standard; second, it is dominated by the demands of management subjects, and the value needs of other stakeholders are neglected. The humanistic paradigm of moral education evaluation criteria emphasizes a shift from a focus on "things" to a focus on "people", without denying the beneficial aspects of scientific evidence. Compared with the scientific paradigm, there are two major shifts in the evaluation criteria of moral education under the humanistic paradigm:

The first is the shift from a quantitative approach to a qualitative approach to evaluation. After entering the 21st century, a critique of quantitative evaluation in its true sense began to appear. For example, some commentators have pointed out that the quantitative evaluation of morality is not conducive to the sound development of students' personality, and it is easy to cause students to develop a dependent personality and divisive personality^[8]; some commentators believe that the moral evaluation of schools should go beyond the quantitative orientation^[9], and a more humanistic, more focused on the children's subjectivity and dignity of personality should be implemented in a more humanistic way of moral education evaluation^[10]. These critiques focus on the reality of over-reliance on quantitative evaluation, all agreeing that the excessive pursuit of quantitative standards can no longer meet the needs of comprehensive human development, and suggest replacing them with qualitative evaluations that are more educative, humanistic, and respectful of students' subjectivity and personality. Qualitative evaluation standards follow the humanistic value orientation, emphasizing "the human being as the standard for measuring the value of all things"^[11], and paying attention to the details of educational life and specific situations. It is not by virtue of the score of students for simple right and wrong or superiority and inferiority of the assessment, but focus on students' daily learning behavior, and the formation of archival records as the basis for evaluation; not to identify the management as the ultimate goal, but in the grasp of the performance of the students in real situations on the basis of the performance of the information put forward to improve the proposal, the purpose is to promote the improvement of the quality of human morality.

Secondly, from the management of the subject claims as the dominant shift to pay attention to the value of multi-subject needs. For a long time, China's moral education has been emphasizing the moral viewpoints, moral knowledge, moral norms, and moral behaviors that embody the will of the state and society to be instilled in students, but ignoring the students' own needs for subjective development, which has led to the loss of individual subjective consciousness. The evaluation of humanistic construction of moral education is to construct the evaluation standard with the needs of multiple subjects, realizing the evaluation from "one dominant" to "multiple development".

4. Evaluation method: from "empirical method" to "constructive method"

Moral education evaluation under the scientism paradigm follows the objectivist epistemology, from the research hypothesis, research process, measurement tools to the results of the research are permeated with the quantitative and measurement mode. Taking moral education evaluation in colleges and universities as an example, moral education evaluation in colleges and universities under the scientism paradigm takes examination and assessment as a way, and advocates evaluating students' ideological and moral qualities through precise figures.^[5]

The method of moral education evaluation under the humanistic constructive paradigm follows constructivist epistemology, focuses on existing experience and external context, and advocates qualitative and interpretive methods. It believes that a single quantitative evaluation is difficult to arrive at a true evaluation conclusion, and that only by analyzing and comparing a combination of

methods is it possible to reveal the truth. Specifically, there are three major shifts in the constructivist approach to moral education evaluation:

First, from over-reliance on quantitative methods to emphasizing qualitative methods. Moral education evaluation under the humanistic constructive paradigm opposes taking the appraisee and the moral education activity as the objective object of evaluation, and also opposes taking the precise figures obtained through natural science methods as an accurate characterization of human moral quality. It believes that intellectual aspects of morality can be assessed by means of objective tests, while for non-intellectual evaluation methods such as interviews, observations and file-bag records can be used. Qualitative evaluation does not aim at accurately identifying students' achievements; it advocates that inside the classroom, teachers can give certain comments based on the status of students' performance, and outside the classroom, teachers can comprehensively evaluate students' learning abilities by collecting information such as students' growth files, works, and social activities. ^[12]

Secondly, from the context is not involved to pay attention to the specific situation. Scientism believes that as long as there are certain scientific methods and research conditions, research conclusions can be repeatedly verified, because this conclusion is not directly related to the specific context. Constructivism believes that knowledge is constructed by individuals based on their own experiences, and that the construction of meaning, in turn, depends on specific situations. ^[13] Constructivist moral education evaluation pays more attention to the real performance of students in their daily life, pays more attention to the use of interviews, surveys, observations and archival records to grasp the information of students' growth, and believes that evaluations made in this specific life situation have higher credibility.

Third, from value neutrality to value association. Scientism holds that "objective facts" and "value judgments" must be distinguished from each other, and a neutral attitude must be maintained in order to avoid the interference of the values of the people involved in the results. Constructivism believes that moral education evaluation is not an objective existence without value, but involves the different needs of different stakeholders, such as the state, society, students, parents, etc. It is only by recognizing the value status of the stakeholders and then constructing it through negotiation and response that it is possible to formulate moral education evaluation standards that meet the needs of different subjects. To summarize, the constructivist paradigm of moral education evaluation opposes value neutrality, but rather to reach a consensus through value negotiation on the basis of the stakeholders' full expression of their own opinions.

5. Evaluation results: from "appraisal" to "improvement"

The current moral education evaluation in China focuses on summative evaluation, and the improvement function of evaluation results is ineffective. There are two reasons for this: one is that most of the moral education evaluations under the scientific paradigm are for the purpose of appraisal and management, which is highly utilitarian; the other is that the results of moral education evaluations are often regarded as the end of the evaluation activities, and fewer suggestions for improvement are given, which can't lead to effective improvement actions. This kind of evaluation hinders the realization of the evaluation function and adversely affects the development of students' morality and the realization of the efficacy of moral education ^[12].

On the contrary, the constructivist theory of evaluation sees the deficiencies and suggestions as the real purpose of evaluation. It believes that evaluation results are for "development" rather than "appraisal", "dynamic" rather than "final", and for "improvement" rather than "selection". Moral education evaluation for feedback and improvement has two characteristics: first, it recognizes that human moral development is dynamic. The significance of moral evaluation lies in grasping the

characteristics of students' moral development, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, and then improving their strengths and avoiding their weaknesses. Second, the interpretation of evaluation results should be diverse. Under the scientism paradigm, the interpretation of moral education evaluation results is single, which is mainly reflected by students' moral education scores, while under the humanistic construction paradigm, the interpretation of moral education evaluation results is more diversified, for the part of moral cognition can be interpreted and expressed in the form of quantification, and for the part of moral emotions, attitudes, and values, which are more difficult to quantify, they can be interpreted in a descriptive way. The results can also be interpreted in terms of single evaluation and overall evaluation. Single evaluation can be used to make a horizontal comparison of a certain aspect of the moral quality requirements and to compare the level of development in different students. Overall evaluation is aimed at the overall development of the student's qualities over a certain period of time, and can be based on the "growth portfolio", which is a comprehensive consideration and evaluation of the student's morality. In short, the ultimate goal of the evaluation results is not only to identify the moral quality of students, but also to make recommendations for improvement on this basis, so as to realize the continuous value-added of the evaluation results.

In summary, the humanistic constructive evaluation paradigm is the transcendence and development of the scientific empirical evaluation paradigm. However, a mixed paradigm is very possible in evaluation practice, because moral education activities are concrete and evaluation methods are diverse, which requires multi-angle observation and research on the evaluated person based on the specific situation, using comprehensive quantitative and qualitative methods. Therefore, in the practice of moral education evaluation, it is necessary to choose one or both according to the specific evaluation situation, in order to obtain more real and effective information, and then make a reliable evaluation closer to the facts.

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