



Experience and Revelation of China's Youth Patriotism Education Since Reform and Opening up

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Abstract

Ever since the reform and opening up, China's Youth patriotism education has enjoyed a steady development and great innovation. In terms of the principles, contents, and approaches, patriotism education has accumulated a wealth of experience. It is widely acknowledged that the precious experience is highly beneficial for us to create a new situation for youth patriotism education, and is of great importance on accelerating the patriotism education development.

Key words: Reform and opening up; China; Youth patriotism education; Experience and revelation

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INTRODUCTION

Patriotism is borderless. It is the marvelous tradition of youth education in various countries, and is also tremendous spiritual strength as well as an eternal theme of the times. After 30 years of reform and opening up, in order to meet the new requirements of the times

and practice, China's youth patriotism education has been continuously strengthened and developed in the process of seeking innovation. Therefore, remarkable achievement has been made and a great amount of experience has been garnered. If we conscientiously sum up the experience, it is believed to have great significance and inspiration on youth patriotism education and will elevate it to a higher level.

1. BASIC EXPERIENCE OF CHINA'S YOUTH PATRIOTISM EDUCATION

Patriotism education must highlight the characteristics of the times. Since reform and opening up, China's youth patriotism education has witnessed innovation and development in terms of educational principles, contents, and approaches.

1.1 Educational Principles

1.1.1 Unity of Patriotism and Socialism

In China, patriotism and socialism are unified. Back in July 1981, the great President Deng criticized the separation of patriotism and socialism and exposed the erroneous views of abstract patriotism theory. He pointed out:

Some people claim that showing no support or love to socialism does not mean they are not patriotic. Could it be said that our motherland is abstract? If they do not love the socialism under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, what do they love? (1994, p.392).

President Jiang (1999) also revealed:

Patriotism has distinct characteristics of the times. Its contents have been enriched with the advancement of the times and with the progress of the history, which thus provides new requirements to people. The patriotism we are talking about today is to love our great socialist motherland, and contribute our wisdom and strength to the her prosperity under the leadership of the Communist Party. (pp.137-138).

In 2008, President Hu (2005) indicated in his speech on a form for young teachers and students:

Today, in order to vigorously carry forward the glorious tradition of China, we should hold a high degree of unity of patriotism and socialism, always be mindful of national destiny, development, and people's well-being, so as to make the patriotic spirit flourish in the new historical conditions.

It is the requirements of the times to unite patriotism and socialism for China's youth patriotism education. Since the reform and opening up, while conducting patriotism education, the colleges and universities are always following the principle of the unity of patriotism and socialism. On the one hand, they have stepped up their efforts to inculcate socialist ideas and beliefs in youth during the process of patriotism education, encouraging the young people to convert their passion for motherland into practical actions for the socialist modernization drive; on the other hand, they have continuously made use of the great achievements in the socialist modernization drive to conduct youth patriotism education, so that the young are enabled to recognize the rightness and superiority of the road to socialism from personal experience, thus enhancing their sense of national pride and self-confidence.

1.1.2 Unity of Patriotism and the Policy of Reform and Opening

In China, patriotism and the policy of reform and opening up is unified. On the one hand, patriotism education should be enhanced in the process of reform and opening up. Deng once stressed, "We should not allow anyone to turn the actions of learning techniques and management experience from capitalist society into worship of foreign capitalism. If so, they will be corrupted by capitalism and lose socialist China's national pride and self-confidence" (1994, p.262). On the other hand, reform and opening up serves as a striking feature and important contents of contemporary patriotism. Jiang (1999) once pointed out:

The patriotism we are adhering to is essentially different from the narrow nationalism. People should be enlightened that it is the important part of patriotism to adhere to the policy of reform and opening up, learn the strengths of various ethnic groups, introduce advanced technology and management experience from overseas, enhance our capability for self-reliance, and accelerate the development of the motherland (pp.140-141).

Since the reform and opening up, China's youth patriotism education has invariably insisted on the unity of patriotism and the policy of reform and opening up. In the process of reform and opening, strengthening youth patriotism education has consolidated their socialist convictions, enhanced their sense of national pride, self-esteem and self-confidence, and shed light on the actions they should take to serve the reform and opening. At the same time, drawing lessons from other countries in terms of their successful patriotism education has not

only cultivated college students' loyalty and love for their country and nation, but also developed their global awareness and open spirit, so that rational patriotism has been developed in their minds.

1.2 Educational Contents

1.2.1 Intensifying the Education of China's History

Only having a good knowledge of the history of one's own country will sincere patriotism be cultivated in his or her mind. After the avocation of reform and opening up, the education of China's history has been paid great attention while the country is conducting the youth patriotism education. At the beginning of Reform and opening up, faced with a huge economic gap between western countries and China, a small number of Chinese youth developed national inferiority. What is worse, some young people even doubted the path that their motherland had chosen to go. Deng (1993) pointed out that this was due to the fact that they did not know China's history. Deng (1993) repeatedly stressed, "We must use history to educate the young and educate the people". Jiang also pointed out that, "the contemporary as well as modern history of China is the history of struggle and business-starting history for the patriotism of Chinese people", and "all the Chinese people, especially the vast majority of the young people should seriously study and understand the country's history, especially the history of modern times" (2006, p.123). In August 1994, the CPC Central Committee issued the "Implementation Outline for Patriotism", which is the most complete document aimed at China's youth patriotism education after the founding of the country. It marks an important milestone in the history of China's Youth patriotism education." Besides, according to the "Implementation Outline for Patriotism", the contents of patriotism education includes the education of China's long history, which further gives a good direction for China's youth patriotism education. In the 21st century, President Hu also put emphasis on the need to educate Party members and people through the use of Chinese history, especially the history of the Chinese revolution (Hu, 2003).

Under the guidance of those thoughts, the colleges and universities in China have attached great importance to the education of China's history after the reform and opening. What is worthy of attention is that in March 2005 China's Education Ministry included "Outline of Modern Chinese History" as one of the required courses for undergraduates. In 2006, the Outline has already been carried out in colleges and universities all around the country, which is of great significance for China's further enhancing and improving the youth patriotism education. By intensifying the education of national history in universities, young college students are enabled to have an in-depth understanding of national history and circumstances. Their national self-esteem, self-confidence

and pride have been further enhanced; moreover, it has consolidated their social responsibility and historic mission of building and revitalizing the motherland.

1.2.2 Strengthening Education of State Sovereignty

Sovereignty constitutes the most important element of one country. It is the highest authority to independently handle his own internal and external affairs, and manage his own country. Without sovereignty, there will be no ethical unity. In this sense, national sovereignty is inseparable. Deng (1993) once repeatedly warned the young, "State sovereignty and national security should always come first". Therefore, we should not neglect the state sovereignty, but should be mindful of the education of state sovereignty.

Since the reform and opening up, China's universities have highlighted the contents of state sovereignty education through opening courses including "contemporary international economy and politics" and "Situation and Policy". For instance, the educating the young college students with the "Anti-Secession Law" to enhance their resolve to fight against any thoughts and actions undermining national unity and reunification of the motherland; conducting national defense education centered on patriotism to promote the young to actively learn the knowledge of national defense, participate military training, take part in activities about national defense education, and pay attention to state sovereignty and security, thus improving the their awareness and quality of national defense and so on. The series of education mentioned above can help the young people fully and correctly understand the situation and tasks the country faces. Besides, they can improve the young's consciousness to safeguard the state sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity.

1.2.3 Reinforcing Education of National Cultural

After the reform and opening up, the exchanges between China and other countries in the cultural field have become increasingly closer. At the same time, because of the popularity of Internet, the Chinese youth is inevitably exposed to a variety of cultural information and values. All these above have, to some extent, exerted some impact on the patriotism education which is based on national consciousness and national culture. Therefore, while conducting youth patriotism education, China should focus on strengthening their own culture building, inherit and carry forward the fine traditional culture, develop its advanced culture, promote the diversity of cultural development, carry forward and cultivate the national spirit, and defend the dominant position of nation's fine traditions and consciousness.

When dealing with the rich cultural heritage left by thousands of Chinese history, we should stick to the principle of absorbing the quintessence and getting rid of the dark sides, and inherit as well as develop the heritage combined with the spirit of the times so as to let the past

serve the present (Jiang, 2006, p.278). When it comes to the construction and development of the advanced culture, we should adhere to tenets of arming people with scientific theory, guiding people with correct public opinions, and shaping people with lofty ideals as well as inspiring people with excellent works (Jiang, 2006). Besides, we have generalized our national spirits into unity and solidarity, love for peace, industrious and brave heart, and the great spirit of self-improvement centering on patriotism, and have stressed the use of national spirit revolving around patriotism and the spirit of the times around reform and innovation to inspire the fighting spirits, striving to integrate the socialist core value systems into the process of national education and spiritual civilization, and make it turn into people's conscious pursuit. In the field of education, China's universities have tried every means to inculcate the young college students with traditional Chinese culture, advanced culture, national spirit, and the core value system, which have cultivated young students a clearer understanding of the fine tradition of patriotism as well as the organic unity of carrying forward the patriotism, national spirit and the spirit of the times in the new era.

1.3 Educational Approaches

1.3.1 Giving Full Play to the Main Role of Ideological and Political Courses in Colleges and Universities

Patriotism is the unity of knowledge, emotion, volition and behavior in a more specific sense. "Knowledge" is the starting point of patriotism education. With a right knowledge of patriotism, one's patriotic emotions and consciousness could be enhanced. Classroom has always been the main front of China's patriotism education, and the patriotism education is itself an important part of ideological and political courses. In 1981, teaching and research center for moral education was specially established in China's colleges and universities in succession to open the courses about moral education, the main contents of which was the education of patriotism. Later, although the ideological and political theory courses had experienced three major reforms in colleges and universities, the highlight remained on the patriotism education. "Chinese Revolutionary History" was included in the "85 Plan". The aim is that through the history education centering on the history of revolution students would be equipped with the knowledge of how the longstanding China embarked on the socialist road under the leadership of the Communist Party; besides, "98 Plan" set the Deng Xiaoping Theory as the core content and systematically educated the young with the basic principles of Marxism, patriotism and socialism; "05 plan" has set "Chinese Modern and Contemporary History" as one of the required ideological and political theory courses for undergraduates, which gave more prominence to the patriotism education in the new era. Since the reform and opening, China's ideological and

political theory courses have continuously strived to enrich the contents of patriotism education, improved the teaching methods, and taken a variety of education forms to conduct patriotism education for students. In the classroom, students are systematically exposed to a wealth of knowledge and information on patriotism education. They have understood China's history as well as the reality of China, familiarized the China's suffering as well as the progress China has made, and understood the China's domestic situation as well as the complex international situation facing China. The study of the knowledge above has further stimulated the patriotic enthusiasm of the young students and has enhanced their sense of responsibility.

1.3.2 Organizing Educational Activities on Patriotism

Patriotism contains three facets including emotions, ideas, and behaviors. Patriotic behavior is the concerns and actions driven by the patriotic emotions as well as ideas to safeguard the motherland. It is the direct manifestation of patriotism, is the externalization of patriotism, and is the highest level of patriotism. To a great extent, patriotic behavior is the ultimate goal of education in patriotism. Since the reform and opening up, proceeding from their own situations, China's colleges and universities have carried out diversified social activities at all ranges and to all degrees, which has also achieved gratifying results. For example, "three rural areas" activities to introduce science & technology, culture, and public health are ongoing for many years to serve as universities' patriotic social practices. They have developed their own advantages and organized students to go to the rural areas to offer free medical check-ups, spread medical care knowledge, and provide medical care and pills. Furthermore, they have organized students to remote areas to popularize scientific knowledge, provide medical training to local teachers, and volunteer to go deep into the rural grasses. By giving performances and doing laboring work, the students have come to understand the status quo the peasants face. In the process of these social practices, on the one hand, by using the knowledge and skills learned, Chinese youth have turned the patriotic emotions and ideas into the practical actions of serving the people and the community; on the other hand, through these social practices they have gone further into the community to understand the situation and enhance the patriotism and social responsibility.

1.3.3 Fostering a Favorable Environment for Youth Patriotism Education

Environment has a subtle influence on the human being's mind. As a silent force, good environment has such functions as guidance, motivation, education, and aesthetics. Therefore, it is highly recommended for China's youth patriotism education to create a favorable environment, especially form a strong patriotic atmosphere in the campus, so that the essence of patriotism could exert good influences on the young students in all aspects

of daily life and in any at any time. Since the reform and opening up, China's colleges and universities have accumulated a wealth of experience in fostering patriotism education environment such as hanging the celebrity portraits and their epigrams in hallways and classrooms. In particular, universities have often seized the major events to actively promote the advanced figures as well as their deeds so that students could learn patriotism from them. In addition, they also promote the achievements and experience of China's socialist construction, and spread China's struggle history, glorious tradition and splendid culture. What's more, they have widely opened patriotism seminars, lectures, singing competitions, speech contest, debate competition, knowledge competition, and essay competition on patriotism. These have served as a strong impetus to carry out youth patriotic education.

2. REVELATION OF CHINA'S YOUTH PATRIOTISM EDUCATION SINCE THE REFORM AND OPENING UP

"Stones from other hills may serve to polish jade." With over 30 years of reform and opening up, China youth patriotism education has not only accumulated a wealth of experience, but also brought us some important revelation which includes:

2.1 Tapping and Expanding Resources for Youth Patriotism Education

With the rapid development of science and technology and the improvement of the Internet to transmit information, it is increasingly convenient and easy for the young to get access to information. On the one hand, it has enriched knowledge in the young people; on the other hand, due to the complexity of information on the Internet, difficulty has been increased on youth patriotism education. If we are not able to provide a more convincing and high-quality information to the young, psychological reversion will developed in their heart after they contrasting intentionally or unintentionally the teaching contents and information obtained in the classroom with those from other sources. In terms of the contents of patriotism education, teachers should fully tap and expand the patriotism education resources. In fact, the contents and material of patriotism education are very broad and rich, which could be traced back to thousands of years ago and be something happening in the farthest places. From the history to the reality as well as from the social life to the natural scenery, all these could constitutes as patriotism education resources. The authentic facts or the true stories surrounded are of more credibility and appeal the young college students. They could stimulate students' patriotism and patriotic ambition. Therefore, teachers should be good at utilizing the role models of history and reality for youth students to carry out patriotism education. Besides,

teachers are recommended to use various museums, memorials, martyr memorial buildings, cultural relics protection units and other related buildings throughout the country to carry out patriotism education in an effective way. Since the contemporary young college students have a strong political consciousness and are concerned about national affairs as well as national prosperity, teachers should be mindful of grasping the major international and domestic events that could inspire the patriotic feelings of the students to carry out patriotic education activities. In short, the contents of patriotism education should have the features of authenticity and appealing power, in close connection with reality and changing with the times to avoid clichés.

2.2 Seeking Appropriate Forms of Patriotism Education

The forms of patriotism education should be selected according to the contents of the education so that the young college students could be ready to accept them. Educators should get rid of the past teaching methods such as echoing what the books say and teaching by spoon feeding; instead, they should flexibly make use of theoretical education, practical education, infection edification, comparison and identification, self-education, psychological counseling, and other teaching methods to enhance the effectiveness of patriotism education according to the change of teaching contents. Moreover, they should be good at using high-tech means, so that people are imperceptibly educated in a lively and diversified atmosphere. In particular, they are suggested to closely combine features of the times with the education and use the new way of patriotism education through the Internet. With the development of the Internet, the network has become an important part of college students' life. Many students not only get information from the Internet, but also frequently surf the online forums to communicate with their net friends on certain issues, events, and situations. In addition, Colleges and universities should give full play to the network communication, and hold a good development and management of the campus network, thus dominating the Internet with patriotism. They can carry out such online activities as forums, discussions, communication, and teaching with patriotism as the theme. Through equal communication, democratic dialogue, and active penetration as well as enhanced supervision and other ways, colleges and universities are in good position to strengthen patriotism education and constantly enhance the influence of the Internet.

2.3 Reinforcing the Building of Teaching Stuff

Teachers are playing a leading role in youth patriotism education. The excavation and expansion of educational contents, development of educational methods, improvement of education quality, and guarantee of

educational effects are all associated with teachers' own qualifications. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the building of teaching stuff team and improve the quality of teachers. In details, teachers in colleges and universities should have a strong dedication to work and professional quality. They should strive to study teaching materials, seriously prepare lessons, and pay attention to teaching skills and teaching art, making classroom full of ideological and interesting atmosphere. Hence students could be educated imperceptibly with patriotism lessons. Furthermore, teachers should actively adapt to new situations, study new situations and solve new problems. They should study hard, strengthen self-cultivation, and be creative and good at summing up lessons, so as to make themselves truly become disseminators of advanced ideas, pioneers of science and technology, and producers of excellent spirits. In educational practices, teachers should educate and guide the students in their own words and deeds, setting good examples for the young as people integrating moral knowledge and practice.

CONCLUSION

In a word, it is major and urgent issues for every country and nation to study and try methods to find solutions to conduct youth patriotism education. As far as the above is concerned, it is highly recommended to draw on the basic experience of China's youth patriotism education. In accordance with the actual situation of a country, the nation should strengthen and improve youth patriotic education, guide young people to correctly understand the intricacies of the situation in today's world, and develop a right understanding of national conditions and the objective laws of social development, and understand the mission and responsibility on them. Besides, the young should be encouraged to develop good consciousness and firmness in their determination to struggle for the construction and prosperity of their motherland, nation, and society.

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