

## Research on the Cultivation of College Students' Subjective Consciousness in the New Era: From the Perspective of the Comparative Study of the Ideological and Political Education Between China and the United States

SUOLANG Zhuoma<sup>[a],\*</sup>; CHEN Yiyu<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>Southwest Petroleum University, Chengdu, Sichuan, China.  
\*Corresponding author

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### Abstract

Ideological and political education, as its name implies, has distinctive political and ideological character. It is a process in which governors spread the political concepts and ideologies of a particular society to members of society to maintain the ruling orders of the society. China and the United States, though in different polities and national conditions, use ideological and political education as a tool of political socialization. The contents of American ideological and political education are basically embodied in the connotation and denotation of civic education. Therefore, this article equates the ideological and political education in the United States with American civic education. Based on the history and development of the ideological and political education in China and United States, by analyzing their differences in terms of contents, approaches, and students' subject status, this article focuses on highlighting the difference in cultivating the subjective consciousness of college students between the two modes of education.

In addition to possessing the scientific knowledge and technological abilities necessary for the development of China, the talents serving the socialist modernization construction should also be equipped with the qualities of modern citizens. As the important institution for cultivating modern talents, apart from undertaking the responsibility of imparting professional knowledge, universities should also play the role of modern civic education and integrate modern civic education into the ideological and political education of college students. The modern civic education in universities and the cultivation of university students' subjective consciousness are mutual cause and effect, promoting each other, and developing together. Therefore,

in order to promote the construction and perfection of students' subjective consciousness and the development of modern civic education in universities, by drawing lessons from the relevant experience in cultivating the subject consciousness of college students in the United States, this article puts forward the three approaches of "reforming the educational pattern by respecting students' subjective value", "broadening the educational channels by integrating students' surroundings" and "enhancing the effectiveness of education by mobilizing the subjective initiative of students" to cultivate students to become socialist modernization builders who are not only knowledgeable and competent, but also independent and socially responsible, embracing both individualistic and collectivist values.

**Key words:** Ideological and political education; Civic education; Subjective consciousness; College student; The New Era

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### 1. THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION IN CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES

The American political scientist Orum once said: "Any society must succeed in instilling in society members, in order to survive, ideas suitable to maintain its system" (Orum, 1986, p.365). The process of spreading political values and ideologies of a particular society to members

of society is called “political socialization”. In China, this process is named as “ideological and political education” while in America it is called “civic education”. The ideological and political education, originating from the emergence of class society, is a series of activities designed by the ruling class to exert influence on its social members. The general concept of ideological and political education is defined as: “A certain class, political party, or social group use certain ideas, political views, and moral norms to exert a purposeful and planned influence on their members” (Zhang & Xu, p.8). Ideological and political education and civic education serve a specific political form and social system, and essentially speaking, they are educational activities with distinctive political and ideological nature. They play the role of disseminating political ideology and moral norms to members of society and they appeal to the fundamental issue of “cultivating what kind of talents” and “cultivating the talents for whose interests.” As two kinds of educational systems which develop along with social changes, they are promoted by different groups in different historical periods, spreading different contents, solving different problems, and serving for different goals.

## 1. THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION IN CHINA

The historical mission of the proletariat is to realize communism, and it is of great significance, by profoundly understanding this mission and the inevitable trend of its historical development, to establish a correct outlook on the world and life. This is also the basic standing point of all Marxist ideological and political education theories (Lickona, p.93). As a party of the proletariat, the ideological and political education of the Communist Party of China takes Marxism as its guiding ideology and sees the construction of Communism as its historic mission. Its fundamental task is to educate the broad masses of the people and cultivate people to become socialist talents with ideals, ethics, refinedness, and discipline under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the Theory of Three Represents and the Scientific Outlook on Development. Its fundamental purpose is to improve people’s ideological and moral qualities, to promote the free and comprehensive development of people, to encourage people to construct socialism with Chinese characteristics, and ultimately achieve communism (Li, p.85). The specific content includes Marxist theory, Communist party theory and history, and various policies of socialist state power.

The Communist Party of China has always attached great importance to the ideological and political education. Mao Zedong, once compared the ideological and political

education to the lifeline of economic work and other state affairs, believes that the ideological and political education plays the center role in uniting and leading people to make the great revolutionary achievement of China. He had also emphasized that if the ideological issues cannot be resolved, it is impossible to carry on other importance affairs. In 1982, the report of the 12th National Congress of CPC pointed out: “The socialist modernization drive includes building a modernized socialist economy, building a high-level socialist democracy and a highly-developed socialist spiritual civilization, and the ideological construction determines the socialism nature of spiritual civilization. In December 2016, Xi Jinping emphasized at the national higher-education ideological and political work conference that it is necessary to permeate the entire process of education and teaching through ideological and political work and create a new situation for the development of higher education in China. He proposed that we should solidly build the socialist colleges with Chinese characteristics, and added that “The development direction of our country’s higher education must be closely linked with the realistic goals and future direction of our country’s development, serving the people, serving the Chinese Communist Party in ruling the country, contributing to the consolidation and development of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics, devoting to the reform and opening up and to socialist modernization” (Xi, 2016). In May 2018, in the Teacher and Student Symposium at Peking University, Xi Jinping further emphasized the importance of adhering to the socialist direction of higher education and the mission for higher education institutions is to cultivate talents to become socialist builders and successors with all-rounded development in moral, intellectual, physics and beauty. Marxism, as the fundamental guiding ideology for the Communist Party of China, is also the most distinctive feature of Chinese universities (Xi, 2018).

Traditional ideological and political education activities usually take the top-down approach, stated, emphasizing indoctrination and publicity, and are often referred to as “political propaganda” or “political education”. The Chinese Communist Party’s ideological and political work, with a long history and various forms, has achieved remarkable achievements in the process of national unity and confrontation with foreign enemies. However, since the reform and opening up, the in-depth development of the socialist market economy has led to the transformation of the social structure, with increasingly diversified economic composition, organizational forms, distribution of interests, and social values, making the traditional ideological and political education face unprecedented challenges. Especially in recent years, with the rapid development of China, the society is facing modern transformation, and the development of civil society is gradually evolving. Traditional ideological and political education is

undergoing an overall modern transformation in thinking, subject, goal, content, carrier, and method(Sun, pp.5-9). Under this trend, more and more scholars in ideological and political education advocate that China should draw lessons from the successful modes of civic education in western countries, through the approach of critical reference, to promote the modernization of Chinese ideological and political education keeping pace with the modernization construction.

## 2. THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

In the United States, although ideological and political education is not mentioned by its name, the phenomenon of political socialization still exists. The government's guidance on the people's political views, ideological concepts, and moral norms is mainly carried out under the name of civic education, humanistic education, or social education. The main contents of American ideological and political education are basically embodied in the connotation and denotation of civic education. Therefore, this article equates the ideological and political education in the United States with its civic education. Civic education is an important cornerstone of American democracy, and it undertakes the historic mission of cultivating American national spirit, democratic values, and civic consciousness. On the surface, civic education is a series of educational activities that help citizens acquiring the civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic consciousness necessary for their public life, but in essence, it aims at cultivating the ability and sense of responsibility that capitalist constitutional democracy requires. The departments of educational administration in United States clearly pointed out that civic education is to train young people to have the beliefs required by the socio-political system and to clarify their rights and obligations. The main target of civic education is to train citizens to become "responsible citizens", that is, citizens possessing the spirit of patriotism and sense of rights and obligation(Chen, p.131).

The civic education in the United States, along with the development of its history, integrating both individualistic ideas and collectivism concepts, not only focuses on cultivating individual free will, but also highlights the social group values and concepts. In the 17th century, a group of Puritans, escaped from the persecution of the British State Church, arrived in the small town of Plymouth, Massachusetts, USA, on a fishing boat called the Mayflower. The Puritans were regarded as the pioneers who established the United States. *The Mayflower Compact*, drafted and approved by the pioneers, known as "the birth certificate of the United States", is a compact with great historical

significance. In the New World, with the immigrants' continuous struggling for survival and development, the individualistic concepts such as democracy, freedom and equality have gradually shaped the characters of American nation, and have also become the core of American citizenship. If civic education is understood as the process of shaping the qualified citizens, or cultivating the citizens' personality, the individualistic concepts, such as democracy, freedom, equality and etc., have therefore become an important part of American civic education. However, with the development of individualism, the extreme liberalism and multiple values in American civic education have exposed various drawbacks. Especially in the 1980s, individualism led to a serious decline in social morality and school violence continued to emerge in an endless stream in the United States. In order to restrain the trend of extreme individualism, the American ideological and political education attaches importance to imparting mainstream moral values, and gradually integrates and emphasizes patriotism, moral quality, responsibility and other collectivism values.

According to the 1994 version of the *National Standard for Civic and Government*, civic education includes three aspects: civic knowledge, civic skill and civic consciousness. Civic knowledge consists of five parts, focusing on five central issues: what are the government and its main functions; what is the political system of the country; how does democracy be reflected in the government; what is the relation between the United States and world affairs; what kind of role do citizens play in American political affairs. The civic skill includes both the intellectual skills and the skills of participation. Intellectual skills include three aspects: ability to identify and describe; analysis and interpretation skills; critical and speculative skills. The participation skills refer to the ability to communicate with each other, to monitor each other, and to interact with each other in activities. Civic consciousness mainly highlights the cultivation of attitudes and thinking modes in the process of citizenship education (Wu & Zhang, p.111).

In the United States, civic education, as an important component of school education, permeates all kinds of courses and the living environments of students. Although there are no courses strictly named after "citizenship education" or "ideological and political education", the content of ideological and political education is largely disseminated through a comprehensive course named *Social Studies*, which integrate the knowledge both in social sciences and natural sciences. The *Curriculum Standards of Social Science: Expectations of Excellence* in America clearly states that "*Social Studies* is a comprehensive course of social sciences and humanities that aims to enhance civic capacities. In the school curriculum, the *Social Studies* offer coherent and systematic learning of the selected disciplines, including anthropology, archeology, economics, geography, history, law,

philosophical politics, psychology, theology, and sociology, as well as some appropriate content in humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences” (Chen, p.131).

In the United States, bourgeois ideology is embedded in various disciplines set up by the school. The guidance of political ideologies and values in the classroom is hidden under the appearance of knowledge imparting. Therefore, the traces of ideological and political education are nowhere to be found. At the same time, the schools also conduct civic education through various practical activities, for example through community and social service activities, to enhance students' sense of morality and responsibility; through visiting to national museums, exhibition halls, and celebrity's former residences, the concept of patriotism is transmitted; through the mass media, such as publishing, film, TV series, etc., to create American-style heroes, to advocate the American spirit and the American dream. American films such as the “*Superman Series*”, *Forrest Gump* and *The Pursuit of Happiness* are the typical examples among them. Whether in the classroom or outside of class, American schools always take the student as the center of educational process, emphasizing the cultivation of students' subjective consciousness and the exertion of subjective initiative. In the classroom, students are often encouraged to think, analyze, and judge by means of reports, simulations, discussions, debates, etc. Outside the classroom, students are often encouraged to learn civic knowledge and exercise their civic skills through their participation in campus activities, social surveys, and volunteer services.

## 2. THE COMPARISON AND ANALYSIS OF IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION BETWEEN CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES

Ideological and political education, as its name implies, is a process in which the ruling class or governing party spread the political values and ideology to members of the society in order to maintain their ruling order. China and the United States, though in different polities and national conditions, use ideological and political education as a tool of political socialization. The civic education in the United States seems to be merely serving for the purpose of constructing citizenship, disseminating civic knowledge, teaching civic skills, and cultivating civic consciousness. However, in essence, the ideological nature of civic education is implied in the process of cultivating qualified citizens of capitalist society. Therefore, the two educational modes have consistency in the standpoint of serving the interests of the ruling class. However, due to the differences in the state system, the nature of political parties, and the current social development status, the ideological and political education of the two countries reflects the differences in terms of contents, approaches, and students' subject status.

### 2.1 The Contents of Ideological and Political Education in China and the United States

According to the viewpoint of Marxism, the proletariat must make its own values become the guiding ideology of the society. Therefore, the socialist society must adopt the measures of ideological and political education to ensure the guiding position of Marxist ideology. In socialist China, Marxist ideology and the theory system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, which is produced by combining Marxist ideology and with the reality of China, are the guiding ideology for the Communist Party of China to govern the country. Since the founding of New China, the ideological and political education of China, with the distinctive Marxist theoretical characteristics, consisting of Marxist political theory, the socialist path, principles, and policies, is targeting at achieving people's self-confidence in our path, theories, systems and culture. The Ideological and political education in colleges and universities, taking political ideological education and value guidance as the first priority, in consideration of the ideological characteristics and practical needs of college students, also includes moral quality education, mental health education, career planning education and etc.

The education of citizens' rights and obligations is an important part of American civic education, reflecting both the individualist and collectivist values. The historical events such as “Mayflower”, “Westward Movement” and “Gold Rush” have further made individualistic characteristics a distinctive mark of the American nation. Individualism emphasizes that people have the right to decide their own freedom of life and advocates the importance of individual rights, putting forward that individual freedom and rights take precedence over any kind of organized social life. Individualists believe that people have the freedom to the greatest extent to choose their own goals and the means and methods adopted and to put into action under the condition of not violating the law (Larry & Richard, p.112). Since the individualistic concepts, such as freedom, democracy and equality, are in line with the principles of the capitalist constitutional system of the United States, these values are further advocated and promoted by the federal government, becoming an important part of the American civic education. However, with the radicalization of the individualist concepts, the extreme liberalism and multi-valued social morality lead to the social disorder in United States. Beginning from 1980s, the civic education in the United States began to strengthen the concepts of collectivism, such as the sense of responsibility and public service awareness. Therefore, the balance of rights and obligations has become a major feature of American civic education. In addition, American civic education has also incorporated many other contents of ideological and political education, such as moral education, legal education and ideal and faith education.

Ideological and political education and civic education, as open educational systems, are constantly evolving with the changes of the times. Along with the changing global situations, national conditions, and social relations, in the process of mutual learning, the tasks, contents, and methods of the two educational systems continuously change. Therefore, the analysis of Chinese ideological and political education and American civic education should also be based on the historical background and realistic conditions.

## **2.2 The Students' Subject Status of Ideological and Political Education in China and the United States**

The traditional ideological and political education of China, taking the educator as the subject and the educated as the object, embodies the state-led and teacher-centered education mode, emphasizing on political education and ideological guidance and its political and instrumental function is clearly revealed in the process. Since the traditional ideological and political education ignores the subjective initiative of the educational object, the educated is set as a passive "receiver". Top-down indoctrination is generally adopted as the only teaching methods, lacking the respects for students' independence, equality, and autonomy, which often leads to rebellious emotions and negative effects.

Civic education in the United States, taking both the educator and the educated as the "dual subjects", reflecting the consideration of students' independence, equality and initiative, focuses on the interaction between the two roles of educational process. Under the leadership of the country, and under the implicit guidance of teachers, the students, through the methods of exploration, such as thinking, discussions, and practice, realize the construction of citizenship in the bottom-up process.

## **2.3 the Approaches of Ideological and Political Education in China and the United States**

The ideological and political education of the Chinese Communist Party, originating from the revolutionary era, was devoted to political guidance and ideological construction and served for the purpose of class struggling and political fighting. Therefore, the methods of top-down indoctrination were often adopted as the main approach to disseminate the ideologies and policies, highlighting the country's dominance and authority over ideological and political education. Although this education approach once played a huge role in unifying ideology and consolidating state power, it has neglected the subjective values and functions of the educated. In recent years, China's socialist market economy system has gradually improved, the construction of democracy and the legal system has been continuing to advance, and people's values have been developing towards diversification, overall speaking, the entire society is in the process of modernization from stagnation to change and from closure to opening. Facing the modern transformation of social politics, economy,

and culture, the ideological and political education in colleges and universities should also advance with the times and train qualified talents that meet the needs of modern society. Over the past few decades, with the rapid development of China's modernization and the reference to the experience of civic education, China's ideological and political education has begun to pay more attention to adopting the multi-dimensional infiltration modes and learning to combine theories with practice.

The civic education in the United States serves the capitalist constitutional system, inheriting the spirit of democracy and legal system originating from the era of ancient Greece and ancient Rome. In terms of its education methods, it focused on the interaction between the educators and education objects, regarding the educated as an independent and initiative subject. Specifically, the characteristics of the approaches of civic education in the United States are mainly embodied in the "heuristic methods" in the classroom and the "service education" outside the classroom. In class, apart from knowledge imparting, by combining subject knowledge with civic knowledge, teachers will inspire students to establish civic consciousness that is necessary for qualified citizens of capitalist society. In terms of educational methods, the interaction methods, such as debating, discussion, and role playing, is usually adopted in the class. In the process, students are making independent choices to accept the ideas and concepts under the implicit guidance of the teacher. Outside the classroom, American schools encourage students to enter the community and social organizations to carry out various volunteer activities and service work. Students combine civic education-related knowledge and the skills learned in the classroom with the practical experience to further deepen their understanding of patriotism, civil rights, and obligations and to gradually from a sense of social responsibility and a sense of belonging. *The Education Goals of United States in 2000* proposes that the community shall be transformed into a large classroom and every student must participate in social service activities. The civic education contents, such as civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic morality, should be incorporated into the social service activities and enhance their sense of identity, belonging and responsibility (Chen, p.132).

## **3. THE STATUS QUO AND DEVELOPMENT OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' SUBJECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE NEW ERA**

The report of the Nineteenth Party Congress made a major judgment that China has entered a new era, and divided the process of modernization construction into two phases: "from 2022 to 2003, based on the

establishment of moderately prosperous society in all aspects, we should strive for fifteen years to basically realize socialist modernization” ;“From the year of 2003 to the middle of this century, on the basis of basically realizing modernization, we will continue to struggle for fifteen years to build China into a prosperous, democratic, refined, harmonious and beautiful socialist modernized country ”. The strategic schedule has opened up a new journey of building a socialist modernized country and realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. In recent years, with the acceleration of China’s modernization drive and the transformation, upgrading, and in-depth development of the political, economic, and cultural fields, China is in urgent need of a number of modern talents that is not only equipped with scientific knowledge and technologies but also with the necessary qualities of modern citizens. As an important institution for cultivating modern talents, colleges and universities should not only undertake the responsibilities of imparting scientific knowledge but also give full play to the functions of modern civic education, giving guidance to young people to help them establishing their civic identity, civic skills and civic responsibility and becoming independent, virtuous and capable talents that is competent to the task of socialist modernization construction.

The subjective consciousness of college students refers to the college students’ self-consciousness, regarding their subject status, self-regulation ability and value of self-existence. It is a reflection of students’ autonomy, independence and creativity in their subjective consciousness. The individualistic values and collectivism values transmitted by the modern civic education of universities are reflected in the process of constructing the subjective consciousness of college students. With the awakening and improvement of the subjective consciousness of the college students, they gradually recognize their status, subjective initiative and self worth as a modern citizen of the society and will actively and willingly integrate their personal development with the development of the society. In this process, the modern civic education of colleges and universities and the cultivation of university students’ subjective consciousness are mutual cause and effect, promoting each other, and developing together.

### **3.1 The Status Quo of Chinese University Students’ Subjective Consciousness in the New Era**

The subjective consciousness, or the subject’s self-consciousness, refers to people’s self-consciousness about their own subjective status, subjective ability and subjective value. The current “post-90s” and “post-00” generation of college students reveal two extremes states in their subjective consciousness: the state of “self-

consciousness without self” and the state of “complete selfhood”. The state of the “self-consciousness without self” is mainly reflected in the group of college students who are used to being “directed” under the command of the teacher or families. In the school, they tend to believe in the authority of the teacher while at home, they always follow the arrangements made by their parents without making any opinions or decisions by themselves. These students, lacking the ability of independent thinking, are weak in self- consciousness regarding their identity and responsibility. Another group of university students with strong personality, self-respect and sense of subjectivity shows the state of “complete selfhood”. This kind of students is often too self-centered to consider for others. They tend to overlook others’ subjective value and look down upon the collectivist values(Hu,p. 124). In summary, the state of “self-consciousness without self” and the state of “complete selfhood”, which symbolize the absence and the extreme of the subjective consciousness, reflect the necessity of arousing and improving the subjective consciousness of college students.

### **3.2 Drawing Lessons From American Civic Education and Cultivating the Subjective Consciousness of College Students**

American college students, often rated as independent, innovative, and practical, are shaped by the training model of American civic education. Civic education in the United States devotes to disseminating civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic consciousness necessary for the system of capitalist constitutional democracy. Although it emphasizes ideological indoctrination and serves the interests of the ruling class, as Chinese ideological and political education does, it also contributes to awakening and improving students’ subjective consciousness through shaping their civic identity. In the process of civic education, through the “bottom-up” construction models, American students are guided to establish citizenship that suits the modern society, which also promotes the construction of students’ subjective consciousness. By drawing lessons from American civic education, this article puts forward three approaches to promote the construction and perfection of students’ subjective consciousness and the development of modern civic education. The three approaches are specified as follows:

### **3.3 Reform the Educational Pattern by Respecting Students’ Subjective Value**

Chinese traditional ideological and political education takes teacher as the subject and student as the object. The subject, in the position of “absolute center”, is the only role that has thoughts, values and authority while the object, which is often marginalized, is regarded as a passive “receiver”. The modes of mechanical indoctrination, contrary to the humanistic education concepts, often lead to students’ resistance and resentment.

Paulo Freire, in his book *Pedagogy of Oppressed*, rated indoctrination education as a kind of “depositing” behavior. Students are compared to “bank accounts” while teachers are compared to “depositor”. The process of depositing replaces the commutation and interaction between them, therefore, when more money was put into the “account”, their independent ideas, critical thoughts and innovative concepts would be less (Paulo, p.2001) . The traditional indoctrination education suppresses the students' subjective consciousness and as a result, the students become accustomed to relying on and being commanded, and gradually move toward the state of “self-consciousness without self”. They cannot understand and establish their identity and self-worth through the connection between them and the outside world.

The civic education in the United States established a “dual-subject” interaction model between educators and the education objects and placed emphasis on the subject's status, identity and sense of dignity. In the class, teachers often use “flipped classroom” pedagogy, instead of putting forward the ideas or viewpoints directly, they often organize group discussion, presentation or role play performance for the students and under the teachers' implicit guidance, students will be unconsciously influenced by the concepts and ideas that the teacher prepared to teach them. In this process, teachers and students are in friendly relation of mutual assistance. The students, in the process of self-reflection and self-selection, bringing their subjective initiative into full play, will also constantly strengthen and perfect their subjective consciousness.

### **3.4 Broaden the Educational Channels by Integrating Students' Surroundings**

As mentioned above, all of the disciplines of natural sciences and humanities in American schools serve civic education. Although the schools do not specifically set up any courses named after “civic education”, civic education is ubiquitous, both in the school courses and in the social practice. American civic education takes students as the center of education, making full use of all the circumstances in which the subject is located, promoting the formation of joint forces among schools, families, and society, developing civic education in all directions, and finally enhances the penetration and effectiveness of education.

In China, schools are the main channel for ideological and political education, and specifically set up ideological and political education courses. Some of the humanities disciplines also bear the task of ideological and political education, while other disciplines have little connection with ideological and political education. In recent years, China has attached great importance to bringing the ideological and political education through the entire process of school education, advocating the whole-process and all-rounded cultivation of talents. In February 2017, the

State Council issued the “Proposals on Strengthening and Improving the Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities in the New Situation” (hereinafter referred to as “Proposals”). The “Proposals” pointed out that the basic principles for strengthening and improving the ideological and political work in universities include: “We should adhere to the entire process of educating people in all aspects. We must bring the guidance of ideologies and values throughout the entire process and links of education and teaching.” The requirements of the “Proposals” indicate the direction of the reform of ideological and political education in our country. A multidimensional perspective will be adopted in this reform, taking students as the subject and center of education process, integrating all circumstances in which the subject is located, such as teaching, research, management, and society, to enhance the effectiveness of education.

### **3.5 Enhancing the Effectiveness of Education by Mobilizing Students' Subjective Initiative**

The subjective consciousness come from the practice of man's knowing and transforming the world. Human beings, as the subject of practical activities, have gradually gained a correct understanding of their own status, values, rights, and responsibilities in their active transformation of the world and their own practice (Hu, p.124) American civic education attaches great importance to the practicality of education and is good at creating a practical environment based on the characteristics of the subject. In the class, and through research, reporting, seminars, role-playing, and etc., students are encouraged to establish and improve their subjective consciousness in the process of participation. In extracurricular activities, families, communities, and social groups provide students with practical opportunities, and encourage them to establish citizenship, exercise civic skills, and accept the values of civic education.

In recent years, ideological and political education in China has also placed greater emphasis on the practicality and pertinence of educational content. The “Proposals” pointed out: “We must adhere to the laws of education, the laws of ideological and political work, and the laws governing the growth of students. We must grasp the ideological characteristics and the development needs of teachers and students, pay attention to the combination of theoretical education and practical activities, the integration of general requirements and classification guidance to improve our educational level to be more scientific and refined.” The ideological and political education courses in the Chinese universities, such as the *The Basic Principles of Marxism*, have arranged both theoretical links and practical links in the course. Through the combination of theory and practice, students deepen their understandings and thoughts about relevant knowledge. Besides, Chinese universities have also set up social practical courses in students' training program.

The practical courses, divided into team practice and individual practice, are scheduled to be finished during the students' summer or winter vacations. The forms of social practice are various, including volunteer service, investigation and survey, visits to historical site and so on. However, according to the current situation of the practical courses, due to students' varying degrees of seriousness and the single and on-sided assessment methods, the forms of practical courses still far outweigh the contents and the actual results cannot live up to the original expectation. Therefore, colleges and universities should further improve and strengthen the degree of emphasis and reform efforts on the practical courses, and make full use of the practical links to promote the cultivation of students' subjective consciousness, and enhance the effectiveness of ideological and political education in higher-education institutions.

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