

# *A Comparative Study on the Sino-US Ideological and Political Education for College Students*

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**Abstract**—As the world's largest developing country and developed country, China and the United States both attach great importance to ideological and political education for college students. Due to the differences in nature in the aspects of cultural tradition, social system, ideology, etc. between the two countries, the ideological and political education in colleges and universities differs greatly in the educational objectives, curriculum settings, educational contents, educational pathways and educational methods. This paper tries to reveal the differences between the Sino-US college ideological and political education so that reasonable and advantageous aspects of the American ideological and political education can be learned to Chinese effectively promote the ideological and political education in Chinese colleges.

**Keywords**—*Chinese and American colleges and universities; ideological and political education; differences; enlightenment*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Ideology, as an important philosophical concept, refers to the understanding and cognition of the things in the society. As a kind of perception and thought of the world, ideology is the sum of concepts, ideas, concepts, ideas, values and other social factors. The ideological education is one of the basic missions of education at different levels for a country, especially the great powers who exert a strong and profound influence on the international stage with strong economies and political appeal. For the global powers like China and America, the ideological and political education has been always playing an essential role in their education system, particularly in the college education system. The reason behind is simple: how the college students grow both physically and mentally will to a large extent determines how their country develops in the future.

## II. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF THE SINO-US COLLEGE IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION

Since the 1980s, more and more attention has been paid to the ideological and political education in the colleges and universities in the world. China and the United States are no exception. As the largest developed country in the world, the United States does not explicitly adopt the concept of ideological and political education, but it cannot be denied that the contents of the ideological and political education are included in their college education—the American colleges

and universities have set up their own research institutes of ideological and political education. As the largest developing country in the world, China has always attached great importance to the ideological and political education for college students too. In terms of the ideological and political education, there are both similarities and differences lying in the universities of the two countries. Based on the comparative analysis, this paper tries to explore the differences in the objectives, curriculum, educational contents, educational pathways and educational methods of the ideological and political education and learn lessons from the United States to better serve our own.

## III. THE DIFFERENCES OF THE COLLEGE IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION

### A. The Different Goals

The class nature and the willpower of the national education are generally reflected by the goals of the ideological and political education in schools. No matter what the country is in nature, schools are trying to cultivate the ideological and political quality that meets the needs of the ruling class through ideological and political education. On the one hand, China and the United States have similar goals of the ideological and political education. On the other, the fundamental goals of the ideological and political education for the two countries are different too due to the differences of the national and political systems, economic development levels and cultural traditions.

As a socialist country, the national political power of the people's democratic dictatorship is implemented in China. The national and political systems determine the fact that the ideological and political education in colleges and universities must be guided by the Marxism, that the emphasis should be placed on the unity of patriotism, collectivism and socialism, that a scientific outlook on the world, life and values should be established, and that cultivation of talents with ideals, skills and responsibilities should be the fundamental goal required during the construction of a modernized socialist power. In the report of the 19<sup>th</sup> CPC National Congress, General-secretary Xi Jinping, from the perspective of comprehensively building China into a modern power with Chinese characteristics, proposed that "The country will thrive when the youth thrive. The country will be strong when the youth are strong. The

country and the nation will be promising and hopeful only when the young generations have ideals, skills and responsibilities.” [1]

In terms of the training objectives, the National Education Commission of the United States in 1949 proposed the following three, that is, education should be oriented towards democracy, international community and new ideas of solving social problems. [2] These training objectives have embodied the goal of ideological and political education in cultivating the national spirit of patriotism, cultivation, promise, restoration of ethics and morality, and discipline required by the country’s social, political and economic systems, as well as educating their citizens into responsible citizens who fulfill the country’s obligations. This educational goal endeavors American educators to stimulate students’ sense of national pride and responsibility. So, shaping the American spirit, carrying forward the American values, cultivating the patriotic enthusiasm and combating the communist thoughts are the fundamental goals of the ideological and political education in colleges and universities in the United States in the name of the country’s interests. In America, for school staffs or government workers, nobody is allowed to put forward and spread political propositions that are opposed to the U.S. constitution and the Declaration of Independence. This goal of the ideological and political education has been consistent and unwavering in history.

### *B. The Different Curricular Layouts*

The Chinese Communist Party has always attached great importance to the design of the ideological and political theory courses, regarding the ideological and political theory courses as the main channel and frontier of moral education and ideological and political work. Through repeated field researches, discussions, reforms, the CPC Central Committee Publicity Department and the Ministry of Education jointly issued in 2005 Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving the Ideological and Political Theory Class in the Higher Institution and The Implementation Scheme on Further Strengthening and Improving College Ideological and Political Theory Courses, which had put forward new regulations on the ideological and political theory curriculums in colleges and universities in the new times. For the undergraduate students, the four compulsory courses include: Introduction to the Basic Principles of Marxism, Introduction to Mao Zedong’s Thoughts and Pandect of the Theoretical System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, Outline of Modern and Contemporary Chinese History and the Ideological and Moral Cultivation and the Legal Fundamentals. Among which, the outlines, teaching materials and class hours are all consistent. In addition, elective courses like the Contemporary World Economy and Politics, Situation and Policy Education and other humanistic quality concerned courses are offered.

Although the United States seems not to have laid emphasis on the concepts like the Ideological and Political Theory, Politics and Moral Education in designing courses, both the public and private universities have laid out courses with strong capitalist characteristics in the ideological and political education. There are many hard-and-fast rules that can never be broken. Generally speaking, every university in

the US will provide with the students 3 to 5 ideological and political courses, such as Philosophy, Science, Western Economics, American History, America and the World, etc., as well as 3 ideological and moral courses, like Professional Ethics for College Students and Social Studies.

### *C. The Different Teaching Contents*

The content of the ideological and political education is the specification of the goal of the ideological and political education, which is the inner requirement of the ruling class for its social members in ideology, politics, morality and psychology. As for the contents of the ideological and political education, there are quite a few similarities between China and the United States, both involved in the political, ideological, moral and legal issues as well as the mental health. However, the contents also show essential differences due to their different social systems, historical and cultural traditions.

With a fairly long history, excellent traditional culture, the accumulation of the ideological and political education thoughts in China is profound. Therefore, the theoretical system of Chinese ideological and political education is complete. In China, the ideological and political education covers the education of ideals and beliefs, excellent traditional culture, the Marxist outlook of the world, the outlook on life, values, social ethics, professional ethics, family virtues and other aspects. Among which, collectivism, patriotism, socialism and communism are the main themes of the ideological and political education in Chinese colleges and universities. College students are required to combine their personal ideals with their social ideals and lofty communist ideals, their personal values with the social responsibilities and social contributions, taking serving the people as the purpose of life and realizing their personal values in the realization of their social ideals.

By contrast, the central content of ideological and political education in the US colleges and universities is to shape the American spirit, carry forward the American values, cultivate patriotic enthusiasm and combat the communist thoughts. To maintain the long-term stability and continuity, the core content of American ideological and political education covers: advocating the superiority of the capitalist system and vilifying communism, advocating the so-called American Spirit to arouse people’s strong sense of national loyalty and advocating the destined responsibility of American leadership in the world, [3] which shows obvious political and ideological features too. At present, the ideological and political education in American colleges and universities mainly includes political education, moral education and religious education, which are reflected in the courses of civil education, moral education, emotional education, legal education, religious education and historical education. Its ideological and political education includes not only the inculcation of political and moral concepts, but also the cultivation of good habits, emotions, interests and hobbies, as well as the cultivation of personality, creativity and critical spirit. Compared with the traditional education, it’s closer to the real life and closely connected with the real life, showing comparatively strong practicability and characteristics of the times. The essence of American ideological and political

education is to cultivate the values that are compatible with the American social and economic systems. [4]

#### *D. The Different Pathways and Methods*

Focusing on the goals and contents of the ideological and political education for students in the colleges and universities, both China and the US have adopted different pathways and methods. The two countries have many things in common in terms of the educational pathways and methods, such as the combination of in-class and after-class teachings, emphasis on the construction of campus cultures and psychological counseling, and concentration on the social practices. The pathways and methods of the ideological and political education are palpably distinctive however, due to the differences in history, traditional culture and social system.

Obviously, China tends to employ an explicit strategy in the ideological and political education for college students, which adopts direct, instilled and open approaches, mainly through the positive education in a formal way. Therefore, classroom teaching is the main front and channel of the ideological and political education in Chinese colleges. The Chinese education authorities have set up a unified and standardized course system of the ideological and political education and provided with unified syllabus, textbooks and teaching hours. In addition, the ideological and political theory is the compulsory course for all students. Moreover, the contents of these theoretical courses are typically abstract and theoretically profound on the one hand, so they are difficult for students to comprehend. On the other hand, the contents of textbooks are generally simple and disinteresting, so they are often not so interested in them. At the same time, the ideological and political education in China is mainly charged by specific departments and personnel, so a strong executive force cannot be achieved for lack of smooth coordination. All these factors lead to a dissatisfactory effect of the ideological and political education in China. [5]

Conversely, the United States tends to employ an implicit strategy in the ideological and political education for college students, which adopts indirect, penetrating and covert pathways and means quite like how the rain moistens the living creatures in the world. More specifically, in the name of civil education, American colleges and universities do not have a unified curriculum for the ideological and political education. It is characterized by the integration of knowledge imparting, daily infiltration, extensive social participation, in which the coordinative force is highly valued. In addition to the general education and ideological and political theory courses, the ideological and political education is often integrated into the specialized courses. Students in any major are required to answer the following three questions: What is the history and tradition of this field? What are the social and economic issues involved? What are the ethical and moral issues to face? Teachers do not directly provide ready-made moral standards and judgments either. On the contrary, they like to encourage students to analyze, think about and then make judgments by themselves according to American values by organizing discussions or studying cases. In this way, the moral cognition and judgment of American college students are greatly improved.

#### IV. ENLIGHTENMENT FROM THE AMERICAN COLLEGE IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION

Through the above comparative analysis of the objectives, contents, pathways and methods of the ideological and political education in Chinese and American universities, it can be seen that Chinese and American universities have their own characteristics in the ideological and political education. While keeping our own characteristics, we should learn from the strengths of the American style and take some effective measures so that the ideological and political education in Chinese colleges and universities will be conducted more fruitfully in the future.

##### *A. Adhering to the Correct Political Orientation*

All different kinds of thoughts and cultures are vehemently interacting with each other in our world today. The hostile forces at home and abroad have never relaxed their ideological differentiation and infiltration in our country. Therefore, the ideological and political education in colleges and universities has to highlight its political orientation. In teaching, the educators have to conscientiously implement the party's education policies. That's to say, the "Four Persists" should be always kept in mind under the guidance of General-secretary Xi's speech delivered in the ideological and political education work conference on December 8, 2016. Firstly, we must unremittingly persist in disseminating the scientific theory of Marxism and paying special attention to the education of the Marxist theory in order to lay a scientific ideological foundation for students' lifelong growth. Secondly, we must unremittingly persist in cultivating and promoting the socialist core values so that most of the teachers and students will be their firm believers, active communicators and model practitioners. Thirdly, we should make persistent efforts to promote the construction of harmonious and stable colleges and universities, cultivate a rational, peaceful and healthy mentality for the college students and strengthen the humanistic care and psychological counseling so that Chinese colleges and universities will be built into a model place of stability and unity. Fourthly, we should make persistent efforts to cultivate excellent school and study atmospheres so that the Chinese colleges and universities will be effectively governed and cleanly managed. In a word, Chinese colleges and universities should be constructed into the insurmountable frontier to meet the requirements of talents cultivation in the new era. [6]

##### *B. Improving the Ideological and Political Education Methods*

For a long time, the explicit strategy and indoctrination in the ideological and political education for college students in China have witnessed some positive results. However, more and more weaknesses have been exposed. As mentioned above, the American ideological and political education is obviously unconscious, hidden and non-mandatory. So, we should learn lessons from their education practices. What we need to do in the future are as follows:

### *C. Stimulating the Students' Subjective Initiatives*

The modern educational theories emphasize the equality between teachers and students in personality and the active and leading role of students in the process of ideological and political education. As a result, the teaching concept of the ideological and political education in colleges should be changed from the teachers-based to the students-based, and more attention should be paid to the students' internal demands in their process of growth and to their true feelings in real life. In other words, a good balance should be kept between the teachers' guiding role and the students' leading role.

### *D. Building a Comprehensive Pattern of the Ideological and Political Education*

All courses in universities undertaking the task and responsibility of ideological and political education and forming an all-round education pattern in the classroom and society are characteristic of the ideological and political education in American universities. Actually, there exists a fine tradition that an all-round ideological and political education is conducted in Chinese colleges. In China, teachers are not only required to preach, impart knowledge and resolve doubts, which means they should combine the whole process of education with the conduct of life, research and the pursuit of careers.

## V. CONCLUSION

As the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics enters a new era, it is urgent for us to widely infiltrate the college ideological and political education into the teaching of courses. First of all, we should continue to give full play to the role of the ideological and political theory courses as the main front and channel, vigorously promote patriotism, collectivism and socialism as well as the socialist core values. Secondly, we should give full play to the role of humanities and social science and natural science courses in cultivating students' ideological and political quality, culture and morality. Without profound cultural deposits and scientific knowledge, it is impossible for them to understand

correctly the objective world and then actively transform the subjective world. Finally, we should actively expand the space of the ideological and political education courses. According to the actual situation of college students in the new era, courses like psychological health, guide for employment, interpersonal communications and art appreciation, etc. should be offered to guide and train the students' ability of recognizing and dealing with complicated social affairs and temper their willpower so that they can stand the test of difficulties ahead.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper is financially supported by the Think-tank Construction of Healthy Hubei, an academic platform of Hubei University of Chinese Medicine. In the writing of this paper, Professor Chen and some other colleagues have offered constructive suggestions in collecting and analyzing the materials. Thanks also go to the lovely students. Without the interaction with them and inspiration from them in the practical teaching, the completion of the paper is impossible.

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