

**CSCCanada****Canadian Social Science**

Vol. 11, No. 10, 2015, pp. 104-107

DOI:10.3968/7708

ISSN 1712-8056[Print]

ISSN 1923-6697[Online]

[www.cscanada.net](http://www.cscanada.net)[www.cscanada.org](http://www.cscanada.org)

## The Paths to Realize Citizen Education in Chinese Social Groups

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Received 28 July 2015; accepted 23 September 2015

Published online 26 October 2015

### Abstract

In order to build a culturally powerful socialist country and improve the comprehensive quality of citizen morality, the report of CPC's 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress laid stress on the imperative of citizen education. In order to implement citizen education in social groups in China, we need to firstly foster citizen awareness, build systematically educational model, improve system security, create an atmosphere of educating people, enhance the autonomy of citizen education, and take effective measures to promote citizen education in the whole society.

**Key words:** Chinese social groups; Citizen education; Path of realization

Dai, J. (2015). The Paths to Realize Citizen Education in Chinese Social Groups. *Canadian Social Science*, 11(10), 104-107. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/7708>  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/7708>

### INTRODUCTION

Citizen education is an education available to every citizen, which broadly refers to an integration of various educational means to promote people's effective participation in national and public life, and cultivate enlightened citizens in modern society. Although it is a product of Western culture and has not yet been widely recognized, as the world economic integration promotes to cultivate world citizens, citizen education has become a global concern. The development of socialist market economy and democracy also has an urgent need for an effective citizen education.

Path refers to the road directing to and accessible to a destination. Path of realization refers to the channel and means by which people carry out specific activities to achieve a desired purpose. We believe that the path to realize citizen education in China requires to firstly establish citizenship awareness, and foster self-awareness and consciousness of citizen education. Meanwhile, practice is the key to implement citizen education. Take effective measures to carry out citizen education by building educational mode, improving system and optimizing environment. Sublimate the awareness of citizen education formed in practice to be self-education which citizens can accept and carry out consciously, so as to achieve a sustainable, free and comprehensive development of citizen education in China.

### 1. FOUNDATION: FOSTER CITIZEN AWARENESS

As an individual, people's behavior is always subject to psychology. As the highest form of psychological reaction, consciousness dominates behavior as well and is people's intrinsic motivation to understand and transform the world. In order to implement citizen education, we need to grasp relevant knowledge and have emotional recognition, internalize citizen education in the mind and externalize it into practice.

#### 1.1 Necessary Requirement

China's history and tradition have long been deficient in citizenship awareness. With the development of socialist market economy and progress of socialist democratic politics, our citizens' consciousness of subject, consciousness of right and obligation, consciousness of democracy and equality has been constantly promoted. Promoting citizenship consciousness becomes an important content of citizen education in China at this stage.

As a concept at value-level, citizenship awareness can better reflect the development of a country and a society.

UNESCO formally put forward the educational development goal at the 2015 World Education Forum, including: until 2030, make sure that all learners have access to knowledge, skills, values and attitudes necessary for building a sustainable peaceful society by receiving global citizenship education and sustainable development education.

The report of CPC's 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress clearly pointed out the need "to strengthen citizenship education, and establish consciousness of socialist democracy, ruling by law, freedom, equality, equity and justice." The 4<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of the 18<sup>th</sup> CPC Central Committee proposed the overall objective and major task to comprehensively promote ruling the country by law. "Citizen consciousness" is the foundation of ruling by law and the guarantee of market economy. Fostering citizen consciousness and promoting citizen education is the demand of developing socialist market economy, the essential requirement of developing socialist democratic politics, and the requirement of constructing a socialist country ruled by law. In contemporary China, practicing socialist core values and strengthening citizenship education is a very important strategic task.

## 1.2 Practical Requirement

Our citizen consciousness has been constantly awakened and developed, but there is still much room for improvement. Citizenship education has many deficiency phenomena: Learning resources of citizenship are deficient; there is no systematic citizenship education; citizenship education lacks a strategic gesture of value consensus (Zhu, 2015).

What citizens to be created and nurture is a major issue of common concern by educational sectors of all countries. Countries all over the world have carried out useful explorations and practices on citizen education. France has implemented citizen education for more than 40 years and has integrated it into compulsory education curriculum, aiming to train students to have a sense of citizen responsibility and ability to participate in social and public life.

The report of CPC's 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress proposed "to promote prosperity, democracy, civilization and harmony, promote freedom, equality, justice and ruling by law, promote patriotism, dedication, integrity and kindness", clarifying that socialist core values are an important part of citizenship education. In the new normal economic background, citizen consciousness must become our citizens' necessary basic spiritual quality. The "four comprehensive" strategy puts forward a practical requirement for citizen education in each of the four aspects.

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## 2. KEY: CARRY OUT CITIZEN PRACTICAL EDUCATION

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On the basis of learning from the experience of citizen education in the West, our citizen education must be based on the actuality of socialism with Chinese characteristics,

develop practical long-term system, construct EFA mode and create a good atmosphere to implement citizen education.

### 2.1 Focus on Model Demonstration and Exert Peer Education Effect

As an important dominant educational method of ideological and political education, model demonstration method has a positive guiding function of the human spirit and behavior. Human growth and development need the inspiration and guide from models, and China has a long history of using model demonstration to conduct ideological education. With the development of the times and society, the selection criteria and exemplary form have been evolving, but model demonstration method is still important in social education (Dong, 2012). As far as cultural anthropology is concerned, model demonstration of citizen education has formed a cultural symbol, which represents the social value orientation as a spirit and virtue.

Peer education, which was originated in the West, primarily refers to the educational method by which some people with the same background or due to some reasons get together and share information, ideas, behaviors or skills to achieve educational goals. Look from the perspective of psychological counseling, peer education effect should mainly refer to the educational effect occurring in the peer group, which can affect and guide peers with personal experiences and feelings, and has an important role in promoting the adaptability of education. Realization of citizen education in social groups can take a variety of channels and measures, and exerting model demonstration effect and peer education effect is a factor which should not be ignored in the educational process, and is an effective guarantee to ensure the effectiveness of the educational method.

### 2.2 Construct Educational Mode and Focus on Implicit Education

Citizen education is a human-centered education, involving various fields of social life. Therefore, as a complex systematic project, citizen education depends on the joint efforts of government, school and family. A high degree of citizen consciousness by all aspects of society is in favor of creating a good atmosphere for citizen education, and building a government-school-family trinity mode of citizen education.

The government should create an active and positive value guidance to develop a social environment for boosting the modernization of society and people. Whiling promoting a comprehensive governance by law, it should foster a citizen culture centered on citizenship, right awareness, awareness of ruling by law and spirit of scientific rationality, so that social members can be aware of the subjectivity of citizen and truly establish the dominant position of citizen. In the promotion of modernization of national governance, enhancement of national governance

ability and construction of socialist democracy and ruling by law, we need to concern citizen education as a core mission. In promoting and deepening the comprehensive reform, we should improve and develop an educational system to ensure a sustainable citizen education. In the process of building a moderately prosperous society, we should mobilize all positive forces of the society to give citizen education an adequate space and make it become the consensus of the society. We should build a comprehensive, three-dimensional, all-participating citizen education system, and form a good atmosphere in which everyone can be involved in citizen education.

As an important place of citizen education, school's implementation of citizen education plays a decisive role in cultivating citizens of modern society. School education's ignorance of citizen education make citizens lack a knowledge and experience of subjectivity, right and obligation, and has a negative impact on their characters and behaviors. Therefore, school should establish a "people-oriented" concept of modern education, take strengthening morality as the fundamental task of education and integrate citizen education into the scope of school education. By change teaching ideas, it should take cultivating students' personality and ability as the main goal of education, enhance their awareness of right and responsibility from course setup, campus activity and administration transparency, etc.. In developing a reasonable target of citizen education, schools should vigorously carry out a variety of social practices, strengthen students' citizen awareness, develop and improve their behaviors and abilities to implement citizen education. It should pay attention to environmental educational function and optimize the construction of campus culture, so that students can be influenced in a good environment and the effect of "moistening things silently" can be achieved. Whiling cultivating and practicing the socialist core values, further strengthening moral education and promoting "Chinese traditional culture and education", school should focus on citizenship education, and make cultural awareness and awareness of democracy and ruling by law strike roots in students.

Family is the first unit for citizen education. Family education has a profound impact on citizen's character, world outlook, life outlook and value outlook, and has a vital role in the effectiveness of implementing citizen education. However, China's family education mostly ignores citizen awareness, and lacks an explicit and systematic understanding of citizen education. For most Chinese families which firstly contact citizen education, citizen education is not only for children, but also requires parents and children to make progress together. Parents should set an example to change the traditional paternalism, establish citizenship consciousness, and influence their children subtly. While improving themselves, they can instruct their children by their own words and deeds.

### **2.3 Improve Security System, Optimize Educational Environment**

"System issue is more fundamental, comprehensive, stable and long-term." (*Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, 1983, p.239) In order to rebuild citizen education, we must firstly make certain institutional arrangements at the macro level to achieve institutional rationalization and take the road of institutional change, because all good things can only achieve a better practical effect after properly tempered in institutional level. This is a prerequisite to ensure citizen's dominant position and implement a good citizen education (Kong, 2003).

A good citizen education system needs to integrate the resources of society, family and school to build a comprehensive and all-participating education model, and integrate citizen education into all areas of learning, work and life. Good citizenship education system also needs an incentive to guide citizens to participate in citizen education, rationally allocate social resources and actively mobilize all social forces to promote the realization of civic education in social groups. "All what people fight is about their interests." (*Selections of Marx and Engels [Vol.1]*, 1956, p.82) Citizen education system must start from the intrinsic needs of the citizen, implement citizen education to realize the unity of citizens' vital interests and social interests.

"The consistency of environmental change, human activity or self-change can only be regarded and understood as a revolutionary practice." (Ibid.) The process that human transforms objective environment is also a process that objective environment decides and influences human. Any individual's growth is inseparable from the environmental impact, and a good social environment is an important condition to carry out citizen education. By carrying out citizen educational activity, implementing institution and operating educational mode, we can form a good atmosphere of citizen education, encourage and promote citizen's awareness of subject so as to consciously take citizen education. We should guide all social sectors and departments to pay attention to citizen education and undertake corresponding obligations. Take practical measures to integrate citizen awareness cultivation into the entire process of national education, social spiritual civilization and Party building, into the whole process of reform, opening up and modernization construction, and into all aspects of the propaganda of spiritual and cultural products.

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## **3. PROSPECT: REALIZE CITIZEN'S SELF-EDUCATION**

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Self-education means an individual understands his own needs, regulates and evaluates himself to realize self-education. Self-education is generated and developed in an environment and under the conditions of others' education,

and once generated, it plays a positive role in affecting the individual's growth, and becomes the most important factor to affect his success among a variety of factors. Citizen education is a process of lifelong education. "Carrying out activities in the social sphere is a conscious act by people with deliberation, passion, or pursuit of certain goals; the happening of anything is impossible without a conscious purpose or intention." (*Selections of Marx and Engels [Vol.4]*, 1956, p.247) Citizen's conscious learning and cognition is an endogenous force to carry out citizen education. Citizen not only exists as an object of citizen education, but also as a subject of citizen education. To carry out citizen education, we must be based on citizen's conscious learning and cognition. After grasps the theory, a citizen can apply it into social practice so that theory can converse into practice.

Engels pointed out in *The End of Ludwig Feuerbach and German Classical Philosophy* that, "all actions of people are bound to go through their minds." Understanding must converse to be people's will and motivation to make them take action. In citizen education, self-education's primary task is to guide people to form a concept of self-education, stimulate their enthusiasm and internalize the correct concept of self-education into their motivations, and further externalize them to be their behaviors of consciously carrying out citizen education, and fundamentally ensure a lasting promotion of citizen education by this steady powerful driving force.

After the discussion of the nature of human needs, Marx went back to people's practical needs and

development. He analyzed human development, social progress, destiny of mankind, and established human's comprehensive and free development as the highest goal of social development. He took an in-depth exploration on the nature of human with his unique and distinctive practical materialism ideology, put forward the proposition of "human's full and free development", and stressed that "the free development of everyone is the precondition for the free development of all people." Under the new situation, carrying out citizen education, fostering world citizens and realizing citizen's self-education is an important way to achieve human's free development.

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