

A Comparative Study on History Curriculum Standards between China and the United States

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Abstract

Curriculum standards occupy the position of guiding in national curriculum. Doing unified integration research on history curriculum standards of China and the United States in terms of ideas, objectives, contents and implementation, and comparing similarities and differences of them could help us learn experience, and provide some useful reference for the development of today's education.

In July 2001, the full-time compulsory education history curriculum standard (experiment draft) of China was promulgated formally. The United States started the national history curriculum standard project in 1992, published a new national history curriculum standard in 1994, and revised and published it in 1996. Curriculum standards occupy the position of guiding in national curriculum. Doing unified integration research on history curriculum standards of China and the United, and comparing similarities and differences of them could help us learn experience, and provide some useful reference for the development of today's education.

Keywords: China, the United States, history curriculum standard; comparison.

1. Comparison of the thoughts

Theory is the precursor of action, the guiding ideology of curriculum standard is the soul of the standard preparation. American history curriculum standard combines a variety of the perspectives of history, and takes a variety of the perspectives of history as the guiding ideology, including the perspectives of social history, world history, multiple culture, and so on. The perspective of history is people's basic point of view on the society and history. Since the founding of new China, the Chinese history curriculum standard has always used the Marxist historical materialism to guide history education and the education reform. Historical materialism has been formulated the basic theory of Chinese history curriculum standard. It referred in the preface of curriculum standard: "the history curriculum in phase of compulsory education carries forward the national spirit with patriotism as the core and spirit of times with reform and innovation as the core under the guidance of historical materialism, inherits the fine tradition of human civilization, makes students understand and know the development of human society, and know contemporary China and world better."^[1] We could also see that there is a big difference in terms of values and world view of the two countries through the comparison of guiding ideology of curriculum standards between the two countries.

American history education pays more attention to students' individual development and the cultivation of personality in contrast with the Chinese. The perspective of global history, multiple cultures and social history all highlighted the value pursuit of personal development, and shows its historical education emphasizes the humanities and citizen education. Of course, it also attaches great importance to the social value of history education in the United States, but the history education of the United States' pursuit of social value is based on the value of personal development.

In addition to the attention of political value education history, the United States is also concerned with economic development and cultural development value. There is no doubt that culture can service personnel for the society is the core of the American history the guiding ideology, curriculum standards in the United States give full consideration to the students' ability to accept and the degree of transformation of curriculum implementation under the guidance of a variety of historical perspectives, it also requires curriculum standard of the United States has applicability and openness inevitably. In addition, it also pays attention to cultivate students' ability of collecting, understanding, evaluating, integrating and reporting information and ideas, ability of analyzing and solving problems, and new research ability, the curriculum must be open and dynamic.

By contrast, the Chinese curriculum standard only has a guiding ideology, namely, historical materialism. China has always attached great importance to the social value of education, especially its political value. It has great relationship with traditional Chinese study of history, and is not completely caused by the historical materialism. It have adhered the study concept of "humanistic pragmatism" and "Officialdom is the natural outlet for good scholars" since Chinese ancient times, and emphasized more on education's serving the society and the country. China's middle school history education is to stand in the height of the national cultivate people of ability, emphasize to patriotism education of students, adhere to the guiding ideology of Marxist historical materialism, and specifically place the interests of the country in a supreme position, this is a dominant emphasis for the interests of the state.

2. Comparison of the objectives

2.1. The United States and China all set the overall goal for the history curriculum.

The overall goal of the United States: students have to adapt to college for further study and employment history of thinking and understanding ability when they graduated from high schools, and could be in unbeaten even leading position in the international competition. China's overall goal: students should understand the basic knowledge of Chinese and foreign history through the study of junior middle school, and be preliminary to master the basic methods and skills to learn history; Understanding the historical value and realistic significance of Chinese civilization, foster patriotism emotion, expand the student's field of vision, understand the general trend of historical development; To form the correct outlook on life, world outlook and values, and to become qualified citizens with good comprehensive quality lay the foundation. By contrast, America's goal is to help teachers, students and parents ascertain history learning specific direction, in order to help students fully prepared successfully admitted to the university and employment. , and China's goal is lack of specific directivity and empty.

2.2. China set the specific 3D object, and the United States did not set, its specific goals were throughout the course content.

2.3. In terms of curriculum standard language, Chinese history course standard language clear, according to different knowledge is divided into different levels of multiple verb, such as "realize, know, understand", "grasp", "form" and so on which is very specific. American history curriculum standard target expression is more general, the classification of the target language is not clear enough. Most of them are only "understanding", "analysis" and "fostering". For example, American curriculum standard demands students to master the African people's life in slavery: when grade 5 to 12, they could analyze the situation Africans were forced to move to the British colonies of the Caribbean and North America; when grade 7 to 12, they could explain the difference between a variety of slaveries of African societies and racial slavery of the British colonies; when grade 9 to 12, they could evaluate that African slaves and free Africans made great contribution to the development of the American colonies; when grade 7 to 12, they could analyze how the north American Africans use their own past, the European tradition and the values form a unique African American culture. ^{[2] P11}

2.4. The training targets of two countries' values are different.

The United States has been emphasized citizen consciousness and the concept of democracy, it also highlight the characteristics in the history curriculum goal. In 1990, President Bush raised the purpose of the United States' curriculum standard was in order to "develop the citizens who have convenient and fast information, good upbringings, and be capable and good at invention".^{[2] P2} Chinese history curriculum standard highlight the emotional attitude and values deepen, mainly cultivate the students' patriotic sentiment, approve the excellent cultural tradition of the Chinese nation, form the identity of the state and the people, establish positive attitude toward life, and form a sound personality and healthy personality traits.

2.5 The requirements of training students' ability.

The history of American education is extremely pay attention to cultivate the students' understanding and thinking ability, the United States history curriculum standard does not stipulate what the student should master basic knowledge and historical facts specifically, but clearly put forward what the students need to form a variety of history learning ability. The United States encourage students be good at summarizing, good at independent thinking to the historical problem, find history problem, and obtain historical laws. American curriculum standard also pays attention to cultivate the students' actual operation ability, train students the ability of understanding and solving the problem. The objective of Chinese curriculum standard experienced a stage of development, once it only emphasized the teachers' imparting knowledge, and students accepted knowledge passively. The new curriculum target pay more attention to students' exploring the knowledge actively and the cultivation of practical ability, emphasized the dominant position of students in the learning process with particular, and emphasized teaching benefits teachers as well as students, the improvement of students' ability will eventually promote the improvement of teachers' teaching level.

Above all, the targets of American curriculum have some defects in mastering basic knowledge, but especially in the aspect of the cultivation of practice ability. And Chinese curriculum targets pay attention to the cognitive goals. Its defect is only paying attention to the grasp of knowledge and the cultivation of the patriotic education thought, and lack of the cultivation of students' personality, social practice and operating abilities. Chinese history curriculum goals don't have obvious different teaching goal to students of different age groups like the United States, and be lack of targeted behavioral objectives and specific point with operability, that is bad for the teachers in the teaching to strengthen control, is not conducive to a line of educators understand and implement.

The objectives of the United States' history curriculum are more hierarchical and progressive, because it has a relatively complete system structure which Including the overall goals, knowledge and skills. It also listed the requirements of the knowledge and skills which should meet each school-age layer clearly, for example, there is a big difference between the requirement of grade and grade students. The historical knowledge which students need to master only requires students to understand some basic outstanding historical figures and events; and the world history curriculum goals of grade were about to require students master certain history learning skills based on certain knowledge of world history study to improve their comprehension and thinking ability accordingly. It is hierarchical and progressive for all ages of the students' knowledge and skills goal. Through such learning methods, it could let the students of all grades understand the knowledge of world history disciplines with corresponding level, so it also accorded with the laws of students' physical and mental development.

By contrast, although Chinese curriculum objective put forward the requirements of training students' historical knowledge, skills, and abilities, but curriculum objective scattered relatively, fused world history with native history, knowledge goal of specific curriculum content was the main, related knowledge points scattered distribution and overlap, and progressive feature was not expressed clearly. But this setting also has a certain advantage in China that is integrating own characteristics with the disciplines and putting the goals of entire history education together.

3. Comparison of the contents

Specific content settings in China and the United States have their own characteristics, the stipulated learning content is roughly same, that is the content of native and world history, but there are significant differences between the two.

First, the year course content arrangement of US reflects the characteristics of overall penetration and the step by step. The extent of the summary and analysis of the specific content deepened along with the rise of grade gradually, the complexity and abstractness were increased, this design of the overall coherence was accord with the characteristics of history itself, namely according to the order of the development of time to avoid the knowledge structure of the close ties which is helpful for students to grasp the whole world the development of history. Teaching contents began from history of the community, and then extended to urban history, history of continents, develop to the history of the world finally, this learning way from point to surface is accord with cognitive law and age characteristics of students' knowledge, is advantageous to that the student could learn from the shallower to the deeper and step by step, know the continuity and integrity of the world's development constantly, and see problems comprehensively.

By contrast, Chinese curriculum standards have the following characteristics: first, the content standard has a few more visual description verbs than before, such as describe, understand, know, say and discuss. It used to require students to master knowledge simply, now use the verb to illustrate the degree of mastering knowledge for students, what knowledge the students need to know, what knowledge they need to understand, and what knowledge is required for students to create and so on. Second, Chinese history course contents are repeated in different learning stage including high and junior high, that is there are some overlaps in the contents of learning knowledge between high and junior schools, but the content of the high school knowledge is more difficult than the knowledge of junior school, the more difficult content is advantageous for the students to grasp the knowledge firmly. Third, the Chinese curriculum standard reflects the flexibility and selectivity of history teaching content, for example, elective courses of high school allows students select some appropriate content according to their own interest which is helpful to improve the learning enthusiasm of students, and interest is the best teacher in learning knowledge, so students can also be more actively involved in the teaching process, and it is more conducive to students' success.

Secondly, the arrangement of American history course content is beneficial to cultivate the students' understanding and thinking ability, and avail students adapt to the social reality better in the future. The choice of American course content conforms to the concept of multicultural perspective, completely abandons Western European centrism, and emphasizes on the introduction of culture of the rest of the world more and more.

Chinese curriculum content is to cultivate students to analyze the historical problems with the historical materialism viewpoint, strengthen the cultivation of students' emotional education and values. The curriculum content of China pay more attention to the students' understanding and grasping basic knowledge of history. Although its choice is more targeted, but is not quite close to the other disciplines, is not conducive for the students' mastering complete understanding of knowledge, easy to make students memorize mechanically coping with the examination.

4. The comparison of implementation

The two countries' history curriculum standards are given more proposals, all put forward to lay emphasis on the historical localization, Chinese curriculum standard emphasizes the school can give full play to the role of local teaching material in the students' individuality psychological development under the guidance of relevant education departments, combined with the local characteristics, under the joint research of the education experts, study scholars, school leaders, teachers, students, parents and others, and choosing specify and appropriate history textbooks. The curriculum standard of US has clearly pointed out that teachers should put local related historical sites in the class, and encourage students to visit the local historic sites and so on.

However, the implementation proposals of China embody a stronger direction, level and organization relative to the US's. Chinese implementation suggestion covers very detailed advice, from the teaching evaluation system and teaching material advices on writing to specific advices on the teaching activities, evaluation and methods. American implementation advice is throughout the content standards, especially suggested through case expression, lack of direction; so the teacher is very difficult to hold good degrees.

The implementation suggestions of US emphasized historical knowledge with practice, students should use learned knowledge and skills in real life to improve the ability of adapting life; Students learned useful history, and they would be able to make informed decisions in real life.

While the implementation suggestions of China advocate for the students to actively participate in classroom teaching activities more, and have the courage to explore knowledge, so as to cultivate students collect historical data and thinking ability of solving the history problem independent. In addition, Chinese history curriculum standards put forward effective suggestions for the use of teaching resources and the writing of the textbook, but U.S. history curriculum standards are not involving this point. By comparing the history curriculum standard implementation suggestion between China and the US, we could see Chinese middle school history education reform has made great progress, but there is still room to improve.

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