



# Analysis on the National Identity Education of Hong Kong University Students in Zhuhai Universities

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**Abstract.** National identity is the confirmation of the internal unity between the state and the individual, including political identity, cultural identity and many other elements. Combining theory with reality, this study conducts an attribution analysis on the status quo of national identity for Hong Kong university students in Zhuhai universities, and explores the educational path for cultivating national identity of Hong Kong university students in Zhuhai. With the multi-agent efforts, the national identity of Hong Kong university students will be enhanced.

**Keywords:** Hong Kong university students · National identity · Patriotic education

## 1 Introduction

“National identity”, as a kind of “soft power”, has always been highly valued by all countries. Against the background of the continuous promotion of world globalization, the diversification of cultural thoughts has a strong impact and impact on each nation, causing the crisis of “national identity”. According to General Secretary Xi Jinping, China is in the best period of development since modern times, and the world is undergoing great changes unseen in a century. The two synchronously interweave [1]. Besides, China is the only country in the world with two systems in parallel and different institutional forms, which has a direct impact on the identity ideas and value demands of people living in different institutional forms in this country. As a sense of belonging to the political community, national identity is the source of power to enhance national cohesion and national centripetal force.

After its return, Hong Kong has made achievements that have attracted the attention of the international community. However, the increasingly complex geopolitical environment and the negative effects of ideological disputes have deeply affected all sectors

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of Hong Kong society, especially in the field of education, and its ideological risks and challenges always exist. In recent years, the situation of Western hostile forces competing with China for ideological positions and ideological discourse has become increasingly fierce, and its cultural hegemony has penetrated and demagogued an increasingly wide range of media and educational fields [2]. Therefore, social movements are frequent in Hong Kong, such as “national education disturbance” in 2012, the illegal “Occupy Central” in 2014, the Mong Kok riots in 2016, and the “legislative amendment fiasco” in 2019. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 in 2020, the opposition faction of Hong Kong has discriminated against the mainland and coerced the SAR government to “seal off” the border. These violent movements have exacerbated the pan-politicized atmosphere of Hong Kong society, seriously challenged the bottom line of “one country, two systems”, and damaged the social environment and social psychology of Hong Kong to varying degrees. However, what needs to be deeply warned is that most of the participants in these events are the young generation who have grown up after the reunification. On the surface, teenagers are immature and cannot rationally view the complex and changeable political environment and social problems; in essence, they have a deviation in their ideological understanding, lack national identity consciousness and have identity confusion, which is rooted in the mistakes of education.

General Secretary Xi Jinping said at the celebration of the 20th anniversary of Macao’s return to the motherland: “The identity of society in Hong Kong and Macao with the country has a profound impact on the implementation of ‘one country, two systems’ in these two regions.” Therefore, studying the improvement of the national identity level of Hong Kong society, especially young students in Hong Kong, has great practical significance for the implementation of “one country, two systems” and its supporting system, as well as the central comprehensive control power [3]. Adjacent to Hong Kong and Macao, Zhuhai is located at the core of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, with superior geographical location. It has been 40 years since the establishment of the Zhuhai Special Zone. Zhuhai has achieved leapfrog development from small scale to large scale in higher education, steadily improved the quality of education, and embarked on a unique way of running higher education. There are more than 120000 university students in Zhuhai, of which Hong Kong university students also account for a considerable proportion. In view of this, this study focuses on the main problems existing in Hong Kong from the perspective of national identity, analyzes causes, and discusses the countermeasures or suggestions for the education and correction of Hong Kong university students studying in Zhuhai universities, in order to arouse the high attention of the society to the problems of Hong Kong Youth, and gradually solve the problems of “who being trained, training for who and methods to train people”. This study is of great significance for Zhuhai to build a civilized city and maintain the ideological security of university students in Zhuhai.

## 2 Analysis on National Identity

National identity is the ideological and psychological premise of the existence of political social community. National identity is a comprehensive concept of politics, culture, ethnology, psychology and other disciplines. Therefore, national identity is a kind of

consensus. As Rachel Walker pointed out in the book “shaking the world for six years: how Gorbachev’s reform ruined the Soviet Union”: “all societies need some kind of collective identity and consensus. Without this consensus, the state will fall apart [4].” The concept of national identity appeared in the relevant fields of politics during the behavioral revolution in the 1970s. National identity refers to a subjective consciousness and attitude and is also the result of the historical development of the country and the process of individual socialization. Besides, citizens psychologically believe that they belong to the political community of the country and psychologically admit that they have the status of members of the country. The resulting cohesive emotion makes citizens willing to actively work for common life, and willing to sacrifice themselves when the community is in danger. In the era of globalization, the issue of national identity has gradually become prominent. Samuel Huntington said in “Who we are: the challenge of American National Identity”: the crisis of national identity has become a global phenomenon. In addition to their own unique reasons, modernization, economic development, urbanization and globalization make people rethink their identity. People pay more attention to cultural identity and regional identity than national identity. From the perspective of China’s national rejuvenation and national reunification, national identity is a key factor for the realization of the “Chinese dream”. However, from the perspective of Greater China, it is a restrictive shift. At present, the essence of national identity in Hong Kong is to identify with the state system and regime of the People’s Republic of China in accordance with the basic law. This is not only the basic content of the basic law, but also the guarantee for the stable development of society in mainland China and Hong Kong.

### **3 Attribution of Some Young People’s National Identity Crisis in Hong Kong**

In the continuous violent movements in Hong Kong, young people have become the main body of riots and the object of bewitchment by people with ulterior motives. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect and analyze the causes of some young people’s national identity crisis in Hong Kong, and then put forward feasible suggestions. Through interviews with Hong Kong university students studying in Zhuhai universities, the national identity crisis of Hong Kong Youth is attributed to the following reasons:

#### **3.1 Historical Consequences of Long-Term Colonial Rule Before Return**

Looking back on the history of school education in Hong Kong, since becoming a British colony after the Opium War, the government of Hong Kong banned school teachers and students from talking about politics and participating in politics. In the process of education, it also deliberately concealed history and discredited China. For example, when it comes to the reasons for the outbreak of the Opium War, history textbooks in Hong Kong describe it as “a war for commercial interests”, which leads to the lack of correct understanding of modern Chinese history by the new generation in Hong Kong. In the process of education, slogans such as “love Hong Kong” and “I’m from Hong Kong” are emphasized to weaken the concept of the country, deliberately blurring the

consciousness of “being Chinese”. In addition, Hong Kong promotes the education of “world citizens”, takes English teaching as the main means, promotes Western values such as liberalism and individualism, negates the socialist system, creates an image of corruption and decline of the Chinese nation, and encourages Hong Kong Youth to grow into qualified “world citizens”. Hong Kong youth growing up in this environment lack an objective understanding of the motherland and are difficult to have a sense of belonging, which is more likely to lead to a crisis of national identity.

### **3.2 After the Return, Hong Kong’s National Education is Slightly Inadequate**

There are not only historical reasons for the national identity crisis of some young people in Hong Kong, but also practical factors of insufficient national education. Since the return of Hong Kong, civic education has been paid attention to, but the contents of national cognition such as national history and national conditions account for only a small part of civic education. Putting emphasis on civic education while weakening national education makes Hong Kong youth lack objective understanding and cognition of the country, so that they are not emotionally closely connected with the country, and it is difficult for the government to carry out “decolonization” at the educational level.

In addition, the improper selection and compilation of some teaching materials in Hong Kong is also a manifestation of the lack of national education. General education in Hong Kong has become a compulsory course for senior high schools since 2009. It covers a wide range of contents and has no fixed teaching scope. Teachers can choose or compile teaching materials according to the curriculum. But in fact, many materials are not very objective and full of guidance. Some teachers with ulterior motives have produced “teaching materials” for political propaganda to encourage students to actively participate in the “struggle”. With such educational material background, it seriously hinders the national identity of Hong Kong Youth.

### **3.3 The Unique Value Orientation of Hong Kong Youth**

After more than 150 years of colonial history, Western values have had a profound impact on generations of Hong Kong people, and have been solidified and continued. There are differences in the subject consciousness of young people in Hong Kong. In social communication, they emphasize individuality rather than commonness and self-rights rather than civic obligations. Strong self-consciousness has become an obstacle for young people on the road of national identity. After the return to China, the capitalist system in Hong Kong still remains. Hong Kong people’s awareness of “world citizenship” continues to develop. Core values such as freedom, democracy and human rights urge them to have the concept of the supremacy of human rights and the nothingness of the state. In dealing with the relationship between individual and collective, they pay attention to individual emotion and behavior and advocate individual rights and freedom, while the concepts of “state” and “collective” are weak. Strong self-awareness has become an obstacle to national identity.

### 3.4 Misleading by Media

At present, with the increasing development of new media, the Internet has become an important means to connect Hong Kong and the mainland. With the opening of various online forums and social media, there is an important channel for Hong Kong Youth to understand the mainland of the motherland. However, in order to attract attention, some social media in Hong Kong deliberately exaggerate events and use extreme words. The good and bad are intermingled on the Internet, making it difficult for young people to distinguish. Coupled with the lack of national education, Hong Kong youth lack objective judgment on national conditions, which has caused many misunderstandings to the state and the government. The politically-oriented reports of some media in Hong Kong have opposed some differences between Hong Kong and the mainland, affecting the construction of national identity among young people in Hong Kong.

## 4 Guiding Principles for Strengthening Patriotic Education among Young People in Hong Kong

### 4.1 Being Guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era

Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era contains important content to guide patriotic education. Patriotism is the core of national strength. Patriotism is also a reflection of citizens' self-identity, national identity and cultural identity. General Secretary Xi Jinping discussed patriotic behavior and patriotism on many occasions, and emphasized the importance of patriotic education. He pointed out: "we must take patriotism education as the eternal theme, deepen the research of patriotism education and the interpretation of patriotism spirit, constantly enrich the educational content, innovate the educational carrier and enhance the educational effect [5]. In 1994, China promulgated the "outline for the implementation of patriotism education", which was the first outline of patriotism education in China and expounded the principles, contents and purposes of patriotism education. In 2019, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the "Outline for the Implementation of Patriotism Education in the New Era", proposing that young people should focus on patriotism education in the new era.

In 2020, the leading party group of the Ministry of Education clearly requested that strengthening patriotism education should be the theme of the ideological and political work of the education system in 2020. At the same time, the General Office of the Ministry of Education issued the "Work Plan for Primary and Secondary Schools to Implement the Key Tasks of the Implementation Outline of Patriotism Education in the New Era", calling for speeding up the construction of an integrated, step-by-step patriotic education system. The country ushered new wave of patriotic education in a new era.

### 4.2 Strengthening the Integration of Patriotism Education and the "Outline for the Implementation of Civic Morality Construction in the New Era"

The purpose of civic moral construction in the new era is to build a solid foundation of ideals and beliefs, cultivate and practice socialist core values, inherit traditional Chinese

virtues, and carry forward four major tasks of national spirit and the spirit of the times, deepen the guidance of moral education, and promote the cultivation of moral practice. In the era of information diversification, as some young people in Hong Kong have increasingly alienated moral values and national identity, it is necessary to take the construction of civic morality in the new era as an opportunity to guide young people of Hong Kong to distinguish the right from the wrong, the good from the evil, and the beauty from ugliness, and strengthen their ideals, beliefs and national interests.

### **4.3 Strengthening the Integration of Patriotism Education and the Reality of Hong Kong**

The social situation in Hong Kong is relatively complex. Ideological collision and value diversification are the norm in the field of social values. If people simply apply the ideological and political education in the mainland, it is bound to cause many problems [6]. To carry out in-depth, lasting and vivid patriotism education among teenagers in Hong Kong and firmly root the spirit of patriotism is a higher requirement for patriotism education in the new era. Patriotism education should not only seek the source from the history of Hong Kong, but also highlight the contemporary value of patriotism and arouse Hong Kong teenagers' sense of identity and belonging to national culture.

### **4.4 Seizing the Opportunity of Patriotism Education in the Period of COVID-19**

In the period of COVID-19, many medical workers in the mainland have abandoned reunion with family members and ignored personal safety, thus becoming the most beautiful “heroes in harm’s way”. During the “war against epidemic”, the whole people were united to fight against the epidemic, with the same goal. The epidemic was quickly brought under control, and a large number of young people who fought against the epidemic and born in the 1990s and 2000s emerged. Some medical workers in Hong Kong fled from the epidemic and even went on strike under the pretext of the epidemic. Doctors, as representatives of senior intellectuals, defeated professional ethics in the fight against the epidemic. They collectively resigned or went on strike, left patients and fled away from the posts they should stick to, which set a negative example for young people in Hong Kong. The best starting point for eliminating stereotypes is to distinguish “fear” with reasonable reasons from “fear” without reasonable reasons, and the connection between this distinction and “ignorance”. Ordinary people would feel fear in the face of the fierce epidemic, but the medical staff whose bounden duty is to “save the dead and heal the wounded” should not shrink back at this time. Faced with the COVID-19, the SAR government should seize the opportunity to combine the patriotic education of Hong Kong youth with the “anti-epidemic” story that is deeply touching in the period of COVID-19, and use responsibility to resolve the doubts of Hong Kong youth, so as to set up a positive model for them and transmit positive energy.

## **5 Exploration on Enhancing the National Identity Education of Hong Kong University Students in Zhuhai Universities**

The local identity of Hong Kong compatriots, especially young people, is stronger than the national identity. The cognition of treating the mainland as “the other” and doubting

“one country, two systems” is the result of the combined action of history and reality, local and overseas factors. At present, to enhance the Chinese cultural identity, national identity and national identity of Hong Kong College Students in Zhuhai universities, it is necessary to focus on the following aspects.

### **5.1 Carrying Forward the Excellent Traditional Culture of the Chinese Nation and Consolidating the Foundation of National Identity of Hong Kong University Students in Zhuhai**

How to draw wisdom and nutrients from the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation and explore the path to solve the crisis of young people’s national identity in Hong Kong in combination with the social development status and requirements of Hong Kong in the new era has become the key. First of all, it is suggested to actively find the coupling between the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation and Hong Kong’s core values, and integrate the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation into Hong Kong’s national education from the perspective of commonality, so as to enhance the national identity and sense of belonging of Hong Kong Youth. The core values of Hong Kong advocate democracy, freedom, legal system, hard work, harmony and stability. There are many similarities with the harmony, truth, goodness, beauty, integrity and diligence in the traditional culture of the Chinese nation. Cultural memory makes the two coincide.

Secondly, it is suggested to take Chinese traditional culture as the carrier, build a traditional culture resource bank in colleges and universities, give full play to the advantageous resources of different disciplines and college teachers, set up elective courses on traditional culture research, and promote Chinese excellent traditional culture. In short, common cultural memory and emotion are the basis and premise for cultivating the national identity of Hong Kong university students in Zhuhai. The excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation should be integrated into the life and study of Hong Kong Youth.

### **5.2 Strengthening the Construction of Higher Education System and Improving the Value System of Hong Kong University Students in Zhuhai**

In the past, Hong Kong paid more attention to civic education than national education, which led to the concept of “country” and “collective” among young people, but emphasized “self” and individuality. In this case, it is required to strengthen the construction of the education system and enhance the status of national education in the education system. On the one hand, colleges and universities should be based on the main position of ideological and political theory course, play its role as the main channel, and strengthen the education of national history and national conditions. Hong Kong university students must understand their motherland, know their roots, and psychologically identify with their country and self-identity. At the same time, it is necessary to give full play to the multi-subject synergy of school education and social education, and help Hong Kong university students in Zhuhai imperceptibly establish the concept of national identity.

On the other hand, it is suggested to actively promote educational reform and resolve the misleading of “general education”. Schools should strengthen the construction and

management of teachers, prevent the classroom from becoming the “anti-China base” of teachers, eliminate the black sheep, and pay attention to the construction of patriotic teachers who love Hong Kong.

### **5.3 Carrying Out Higher Education Cooperation in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and Jointly Building a Community with a Shared Future for Education in the Greater Bay Area**

In Zhuhai universities, inter-school cooperation and exchanges can be carried out to promote the interaction of young college students in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and create a youth development community in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. With the introduction of “outline of the development plan of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area in the new era”, the cooperation in higher education among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao has entered a new stage of development. For example, “youth dream workshop in Shenzhen and Hong Kong”, “Macao Entrepreneurship Valley” and “Youth Innovation and entrepreneurship workshop in Greater Bay Area” provide opportunities and platforms to attract youth in Hong Kong and Macao to start businesses in the mainland and integrate into the development of the Greater Bay Area. Then, the youth would have a sense of recognition of the development achievements of the motherland. Through the interaction between young people in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, students of Hong Kong in Zhuhai would understand the development level of the mainland and what young people in the mainland are engaged in. Finally, youth group identity will be enhanced and a youth development community will be built.

## **6 Conclusion**

The youth of Hong Kong is the future of Hong Kong and the future of the Chinese nation. They are the witnesses and inheritors of the “One Country, Two Systems”. And they are responsible for maintaining the coordinated development of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao and the common prosperity of the Greater Bay Area. To maintain the prosperity and stability of Hong Kong, the foremost thing is to ensure the ideological purity and political firmness of Hong Kong people, especially Hong Kong youth. Therefore, the leading role of national identity education is particularly important. It is necessary to lead national identity education to enter Zhuhai universities, guide young students of Hong Kong and mainland students to establish a correct world outlook, outlook on life and values, and work together to internalize patriotism in the heart and externalize it in action. Only by integrating Hong Kong youth into the Chinese nation ideologically and politically can we ensure the prosperity and stability of Zhuhai and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

**Authors’ Contributions.** This paper is independently completed by Mingchao Li.

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