

# An Investigation into the Issues and Solutions of Social Practice at Universities

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**Abstract:** Social practice is a crucial part of higher education in China and it is also an important step of enhancing students' overall abilities. According to some research, the form of social practice at current universities are not diverse, and the results of social practice are not promising. The system is not completed as well. To strengthen and improve college students' social practice activities, we must focus on students, and aim at serving the society, leading correct values of college students' social practice. We must insist on building a social practice platform, and expanding the content and forms of university students' social practice. Professors should be good advisors. They should focus on building a complete system, and improving social practice implementation platform, ensuring the social practice evaluation.

## 1. Introduction

One way to increase socialization of students is to conduct social practice. During the process, students need to experience different things and know different people to enhance their understanding of the society and gaining more social experience. College students' social practice consists of academic practice, students' clubs and volunteering activities. The aforementioned three categories include doing professional practice, conducting research, starting up a company, joining clubs, experiencing campus culture, implementing self-management, working and studying, volunteering in different occasions. In early 2012, the State Department of Education and other seven Departments jointly published a policy entitled *Regarding suggestions of further increasing higher education social practice*, putting social practice in a salient position, facilitating an overall arrangement of social practice. The proposal of the policy enables universities to pay more attention to social practice and training social practice abilities. However, some issues still exist during the process of implementing social practice.

## 2. Main Issues of Social Practice Activities of College Students

Social practice is a crucial part of university students' ideological and political education, and it is an extension of classroom study. As the society develops, the ability of university students' social practice is being strengthened. At the same time, more and more students participate in the social practice with positive attitude. College students feel fulfilled in social practice. However, it also arouses a series of issues.

### 2.1 Social Practice Issues at Universities

First, social practice and university teaching are not closely connected, weakening the major position of students. Current social practice content in universities cannot fully satisfy students' professional knowledge and techniques. The current content of social practice includes policy publication, social surveys, art performance, field visits, creative work, voluntary teaching. It is hard to

employ targeting social practice for university students, revolving around students' majors, interests, professional practice knowledge[1].

Second, social practice activities are not targeted at students' professional life, and universities pay more attention to the form. Social practice activities can not only develop university students' social practice activities, but also, they can enhance students' overall abilities. However, some universities have not thought it through in terms of the essence of social practice activities. As a result, social practice activities serve for social benefits and sensation, which seriously lacks thought-political education.

Last, planning and guidance of social practice, the potential and staying power of long-term development of social practice is not enough. On one hand, universities do not spare enough efforts in overall planning and guidance. A lot of things are under developed, such as social practice syllables, credit calculation, faculty assignment and helping students start up a business. On the other hand, universities do not emphasize faculty members' roles in guiding university students' social practice. They do not take the steps that they are supposed to, which leads to low quality of social practice<sup>[2]</sup>.

## **2.2 Social Practice Issues from Students at Universities**

First, college students do not have a full understanding of social practice. Their consciousness, enthusiasm of participating in social practice activities are not enough. It might due to that they lack a good environment to take part in social activities. Because the pre-training, introduction and motivation are not enough for university students, they have limited time to be involved in the society, therefore, they do not have a deep understanding of the importance of social practice, and they are not actively thinking about participating in it. Therefore, many students passively participate in social practice activities and they have a relative ambiguous idea of their content, forms and purposes, which jeopardize the efficiency of social practice.

Additionally, some students are utilitarian towards social practice activities. Because of unhealthy social effect, some university students pay more attention on the utilitarian side of social practice activities. Some of them just want to receive units and honorary awards to increase their so called "political capital". The purpose of "serving the society by using what I've learned" has not come to students' minds, they just want to get more credits when declaring and summarizing materials at the end of a year. Social practice activities which are "False, boastful and empty talk" cannot benefit students and let them gain what they are supposed to learn. Some college students lack responsibilities and dedications that university students should have.

## **3. Analysis of Issues in Current Social Practice**

The difficulties and issues of university students' social practice are a result of various factors and has deeper reasons.

### **3.1 Incorrect Attitudes of University Students on Social Practice**

To start with, social practice and volunteering service activities are quite frequent at universities, especially during winter and summer breaks, universities assign some social practice activities to students, and ask students to engage in. For example, student organizations would recruit students to teach in rural areas. The original intention is great and students are very active to participate in voluntary teaching. However, when actually carrying out these activities, it focuses on the form. Furthermore, universities encourage students' participation by adding some extra bonus for students. Therefore, students have different motives to participate in social practice activities and volunteering service. Students do not have a pure goal, they want to participate in order to increase their "capital" from some perspectives.

Additionally, some scholars think that "students should well acknowledge and deal with current situations and existing social contradictories of socialist construction to increase understanding of society and national conditions, to improve people's ideological and ethical standards"<sup>[3]</sup>. Research results have shown that it has been a noble pursuit for university students to establish awareness of serving the society through social practice activities. However, some scholars think that "because

parents spoil children, and students constantly receive praises from the society, some students lack individual and collective awareness. They don't participate social practice activities and regard themselves as infallible. They form a habit of not willing to do trivial things, and cannot handle big things well<sup>[4]</sup>. Currently, most university students do not have a clear understanding of the essence of social practice activities, and they lack rational understanding of social practice activities, and they do not pay enough attention to it."

### **3.2 Not Enough Foundational Services and Imbalance of Social Practice Bases**

To begin with, social practice is constantly isolated from teaching. Over the years, some institutions and universities regard social practice simply as social practice activities, meaning the students activities organized by the Youth League committee and may or may not be needed. Second, social practice activities focus more on the form rather than the content. According to some research, 40% of social practice is rigid, and the content is old-fashioned. Institutions and universities are perfunctory towards social practice activities, and the activities are not in depth. Social practice seems to be vigorous, however, the scope is still narrow. Last, because of universities' needs, a lot of universities have practical educational bases on campus, and even places off-campus, which are connected with companies or governments. These places provide professional teaching practice opportunities for students. However, these bases are relatively behind, which lead to limited and scattered social practice activities. The construction of social practice activities is mostly maintained by the Youth League organization at universities.

### **3.3 Ineffective Management of Social Practice and Service Activities**

When college students carry out social practice and volunteering activities, students and associated departments shall take some responsibilities and obligations. If there is no effective management, social practice and volunteering activities will not lender good outcomes. For example, universities should be obliged to take care of students' basic living conditions if students were to teach in rural areas. Even if many activities are voluntary, students are only able to proceed their teaching unless universities can cover their basic expenses. Aside from basic services, universities and associated organizations shall establish a complete evaluation system. At a lot of universities, social practice activities usually begin with great energy but end very perfunctorily. They haven't conducted effective evaluation to students, which influence students' enthusiasm in working. Therefore, lack of management from universities and associated organizations are a serious problem in carrying out social practice and volunteering activities.

## **4. Solutions to Enhancing Social Practice**

### **4.1 Insisting on Taking University Students as the Center, Viewing Serving the Society as the Goal, Leading Correct Values of University Students' Social Practice Activities**

University students are the body of social practice. Universities should open their mind and respect individual differences, combining personalities and actual needs for university students, bringing their talents to the full play, and put the social activities in the connection point between societal requirements and students' interests to promote their participation. Students are able to voluntarily take action and actively create conditions to achieve their goals if they have clear social practice goals. Some researchers propose that "Social practice refers to that young students need to participate social politics, economics and culture life with plans according to universities' requirements". Even if there are a lot of motivations and purposes to participate in social practice activities, students should regard serving the society as the primary goal, and view serving the society as their core value. Higher education was created to train talents. At the same time, the funding of higher education relies heavily on the government, which determines that they should serve the society. Based on this, social practice activities for university students need to "serve the society" and scaffold training talents to highlight the educational goal of "educating students".

#### **4.2 Insisting on Building a Social Practice Platform for University Students and Expanding Social Practice Content and Form, Providing More Guidance from Professors**

When carrying on social practice activities, universities should pay attention to the connection between students and employers to ensure sustainable, stable and healthy development by insisting on the principles of co-constructing the society and the universities, co-managing, serving the society and establishing a social practice platform to improve students' social practice abilities. The content and forms of social practice should be diverse, listening to opinions from different people, especially opinions from students. For example, social surveys can bring student perceptual knowledge of the society, and is an extension of strategic policy education course. Technology and culture services, internships are aimed at letting students participate in the actual work, getting to know the work more directly, deepening the relationship with people. Experiencing different work requirements can enhance students' social responsibilities, cooperation, and the ability to solve problems. Advisors shall actively play a role in students' social practice activities, and provide as much help as possible to improve the effect of university students' social practice.

#### **4.3 Insisting on Building a System as a Breakthrough Point, Perfecting University Students' Social Practice Activities Implementation System, Paying Attention to Evaluation of Social Practice Activities**

First, we need to establish related organizations to provide planning, guidance and guarantee. At the same time, we need to make some rules, including requirements, implementation, guarantee and evaluation of university students' social practice education. We need to put social practice into syllables and specify credits and units, running through the whole teaching procedures. We should also establish basic requirements, scientific and effective evaluation system. Additionally, governments and employers shall care and support university students' social practice, forming conditions like "training talents through society and cultivating talents by all people". The government shall use funding and strategies to encourage college students to take part in social practice activities, enhancing enthusiasm and initiative of employers. Employers shall actively respond to the call of the government, and actively participate in training talents, providing a platform for university students. Universities shall thoroughly carry out the policies from the government, playing a major role in university students' social practice activities, deepening social practice teaching reform, perfecting social practice advisors' trainings, establishing training system with employers, and establishing social practice bases. University students need to take the initiative, optimizing self-awareness and strengthening self-strategies and strengthening social practice training and improvement capabilities.

### **5. Conclusion**

Social practice activities for university students is a significant project which needs to motivate the whole society to work on it. The efficiency of social practice at universities cannot live without efforts from different perspectives. It not only needs supports and encouragement from the government, it also needs to organize and motivate different universities, implementation from different fields and social practice teams. The policy support, motivation from the universities, and cooperation from the society are the foundation of improving university students' social practice efficiency. The implementation of social practice activities is the concrete approach to improve efficiency.

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