



# The Background and Value of the Research on Sense of Social Responsibility in China

SU Chun<sup>[a],\*</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>Nanchang Normal college, Nanchang, China.  
 \*Corresponding author.

**Supported by** The 2018 General Project for Science&Education Planning of Jiangxi Province on “Research on Risk of Moral Loss of Social Responsibility and Educational Countermeasures of Youth in the New Era”.Number: 18JY08.

Received 17 September 2018; accepted 24 November 2018  
 Published online 26 December 2018

## Abstract

As a moral quality carries social and individual value in the contemporary society, sense of social responsibility is not only excellent civilization of the Chinese nation but also a fundamental moral quality that individuals are supposed to possess in the new era. In recent years, however, individuals’ sense of social responsibility has faced severe challenges from mutiple aspects, that is to say, failing to fulfill their social responsibilities, lacking sense of social responsibility under the central national governance and confronting social responsibility risks generated by the challenges of public crisis. Therefore, in-depth systematic thinking on the research of individual sense of social responsibility and theoretical guidance on cultivation of sense of social responsibility will help deepen people’s understanding of the sense of social responsibility and enrich the theory of cultivating the sense of social responsibility. Based on the above-mentioned aspects, the problems of individual sense of social responsibility will be better revealed and the level of cultivating the quality can be improved.

**Key words:** Sense of of social responsibility; Contemporary background; Value

Su, C. (2018). The Background and Value of the Research on Sense of Social Responsibility in China. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 14(4), 43-47. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/10762>  
 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/10762>

## INTRODUCTION

Social relations of people can be compared to a huge and intangible network, making social responsibility dots on it. Harmony, stability and benign operation of the society depend on the stability and coordination of the entire network. Social responsibility has emerged as human society takes shape and has become increasingly specific and clarified with social progress. Individuals are supposed to voluntarily fulfill their social responsibility, which is a moral quality people are supposed to carry. The rise of the research on sense of social responsibility is not accidental, which is not only an objective requirement of individual and social development but also an inevitable result of the development of modern education.

## 1. BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH ON SENSE OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

### 1.1 Sense of Social Responsibility is Excellent Civilization of the Chinese Nation

In the time-honored traditional Chinese culture, the sense of social responsibility is like a dazzling pearl shining with unique light. Among the ancient men of letters, Fan Zhongyan’s “One should be the first to worry about social problems and the last to enjoy universal happiness” and “One should be concerned about the people when in office and the state affairs when out of office”, Wen Tianxiang’s “Everyone must die; let me but leave a loyal heart shining in the pages of history”, Gu Yanwu’s “Even common people should bear the responsibility for the fate of their country”, Zhang Zai’s “To ordain conscience for Heaven and Earth, to secure life and fortune for the people, to continue lost teachings for past sages, to establish peace for all future generations” and Gu Xiancheng of the Ming Dynasty composing the couplet that “the rain the sound of the wind, the sound of the object; family affairs and the world, concerned about everything.” The verses have

vividly reflected the ancient people's sense of social responsibility, depicted the patriotic enthusiasm and sense of social responsibility of people with lofty ideal in the history and presented the closely connection between the excellent Chinese cultural tradition and sense of social responsibility. According to Confucius, "performing filial and fraternal duties is the foundation of benevolence," which means that respecting the elderly and one's parents as well as caring for the younger generation constitute the foundation for individuals to behave benevolently, conduct themselves and fulfill their social responsibility, a noble quality displayed in simple words.

Sense of social responsibility is not only an important part of traditional Chinese culture but also a fundamental moral quality that contemporary citizens must possess. According to the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), "China needs to comprehensively improve the moral quality of citizens... guide people to consciously fulfill their legal obligations as well as social and family responsibilities." The report of the 19th CPC National Congress also highlighted the need to "promote integrity, institutionalize volunteer services and strengthen people's sense of social responsibility, rules and dedication." Socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, which is a new historical orientation of China's development. President Xi Jinping pointed out that "Domestic people have not only posed higher requirements for material and cultural life but also increasing demands on democracy, rule of law, fairness, justice, security and social environment." Only by better cultivating individuals' sense of social responsibility can China "promote the coordinated development of socialist spiritual and material civilization." In December 2016, President Xi highlighted in the National College Ideological and Political Work Conference that "relevant sectors need to educate and guide students to properly understand the macro development trend of the world and China, Chinese characteristics and the comparison with other countries as well as their responsibility in the era and historical mission." Therefore, fulfilling social responsibility actively has become top priority in the cultivation of contemporary citizens' moral quality. As a programmatic document of the basic ethical norms of Chinese citizens, *Guidelines on the Implementation of Citizens' Moral Construction* points out that "Respecting individuals' legitimate rights and interests and their fulfilment of social responsibilities should be integrated. Relevant sectors need to guide each citizen to consciously fulfill the obligations stipulated by the Constitution and laws, actively undertake their social responsibilities and develop a socialist concept of justice and interests prioritizing interests of the country and its people and fully respecting the legitimate rights of citizens by

combining rights and obligations."<sup>1</sup> *Core Qualities of the Development of Chinese Students* focuses on cultivating "people of all-round development" and clearly points out the social responsibility of Chinese students, that is, "They are supposed to carry self-esteem, self-discipline, civility and courtesy, honesty and friendliness as well as generosity. They also need to show filiality and gratitude, enthusiasm for public welfare and volunteer services, dedication and awareness of teamwork and mutual help. Chinese students should take the initiative of performing duties and fulfilling their responsibilities to be responsible for themselves and others, distinguish between right and wrong, develop the awareness of regulations and rule of law, actively fulfill civic obligations and exercise citizens' rights rationally. The students are supposed to value freedom and equality, help maintain social fairness and justicem love and respect the nature and uphold green lifestyles as well as sustainable development concepts and action." (Anonymous, 2016, pp.1-3)

## 1.2 Sense of Social Responsibility Is Fundamental Moral Quality of Individuals

In the field of human social history, people's responsibilities are absolute and individuals must be entirely responsible for themselves, not only responsible for the social environment determining their development but also all social conditions that affect their self-responsibility (Xue, 2005, p.230). Non-Government Organization hosted the first Global Convention Conference in December 2001 in Lille, France, approving the *Charter of Human Responsibilities* taking building a world of "diversity, responsibility and coordinated efforts" as an important ethical goal. Representing the future of mankind and the hope of a country, individuals bear the historical responsibility of safeguarding peaceful development of the world, sound development of mankind and sustainable development of the nature. Only by combining the realization of personal and social value in the practice of fulfilling social responsibility can the value of individuals' life be truly shown. According to Marxist's theory of relations between "individuals and the society", individuals as sum of all social relations and the society are mutually premised, influenced and promoted. The International Symposium *Education for the 21st Century* held by UNESCO listed human morality, ethics and values as the first challenges facing humans in the 21st century. The conference also clarified that ideals, sense of responsibility, autonomy, persistence, adaptability and

<sup>1</sup> *Guidelines on the Implementation of Citizens' Moral Construction* is a guidance-oriented document for carrying forward the national spirit and the spirit of the times, developing good social morality, promoting the coordinated development of material and spiritual civilization and comprehensively propeling the construction of the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The document was issued and implemented by the CPC Central Committee on September 20, 2001

psychological endurance are the main characteristics of talents in the 21st century (Lawson, 1996, p.2). A. J. M. Milne claims that nine moral principles are indispensable in all social life when analyzing commonality in cultural diversity, including virtue, respect for human life, justice, partnership, social responsibility, freedom without imperious interference, honest behavior, courtesy and welfare for children (Milne, 1997, p.57). If individuals do not live in a responsible way that is conducive to his or her physical and mental health, a country is unable to provide adequate health care to cover everyone. The state also cannot protect the environment well if individuals do not focus on saving resources and using recycled products. Moreover, if individuals generally lack sense of justice and gradually lose tolerance for differences, the ideal of building a strong, democratic, civilized, harmonious, and beautiful society will be more difficult. Therefore, sense of social responsibility as a valuable quality carrying social and individual value is a fundamental moral quality that individuals of the new era are supposed to possess.

### **1.3 Individuals' Sense of Social Responsibility is Facing Severe Challenges**

From a global perspective, human beings entering the 21st century are facing many crises, such as ecological crises caused by environmental degradation caused by human reproduction, survival crises of vulnerable groups caused by capitalist systems and global markets and moral crises generated by weakening responsibility of individuals. The crises faced by mankind have also posed severe challenges to individuals' sense of social responsibility.

First, individuals are failing to fulfill their social responsibility. As science and technology opened the door to enlightenment for humans, the society entered a phase of modern civilization and instrumental rationality was enshrined, governing all fields. With the advancement of science and technology and the development of productivity, people have been enjoying the tremendous progress brought by technological development and wealth growth, while adequate importance has not been attached to sense of social responsibilities. Instead, consciousness of morality, sense of responsibility and ethical value are increasingly undervalued. Despite economic growth, productivity development and scientific and technological progress, the problems of ecological destruction, lack of morality and social indifference are still looming (Su, 2009, p.5). The crisis facing the current society is generated by the fact that individuals have failed to fulfill their social responsibility. In terms of our country, the ancient China has undergone earth-shaking changes since the reform and opening up, presenting a brand-new country integrating old and new things as well as true and false concepts which has made it hard for people to distinguish between the true and the false. In the phase of economic transition, traditional moral system has been greatly affected in an adverse way. In

the face of a brand new China, a moral system adapting to market economy has not yet been developed which is accompanied by the lack of instrumental rationality and neglect of value rationality, making many modern people impetuous for quick success (Hu, 2009, p.190). In addition, the virtual nature of new media has also weakened individuals' sense of social responsibility, generated lack of integrity and social morality and caused irrationality and irresponsibility.

Second, individuals tend to lack sense of social responsibility under the central national control. Unlike the process of internal bottom-to-top modernization in the West, the tension and contradiction of external modernization in China have highlighted the difficulties facing the country in its trials. Driven by the mode of central national governance and external forces of market-oriented economy development, the unbalanced social environment has adversely affected contemporary people's outlook on the world and life as well as values severely, miring individuals' sense of social responsibility in dilemma prominently and posing threats to the practice of socialism core values. Individual's sense of social responsibility marking the level of national modernization and social civilization is an important part of the modernization of people. However, the lack of individuals' sense of social responsibility has been inevitably caused under the central national governance.

Third, individuals' sense of social responsibility is facing challenges of public crisis. According to the 19th CPC National Congress, "Both China and the world are in the midst of profound and complex changes." "We will improve risk prevention and control mechanisms in all areas and skillfully handle various complex issues." However, along with the transformation of an acquaintance society to a stranger society, egoism and passive folklore caused by the pattern of difference sequence in the acquaintance society have not been eliminated, while the sense of social responsibility highlighted in a stranger society has not improved, posing crises to individuals' qualities. In reality, individuals' sense of social responsibility is facing crises for vandalization of public products, deterioration of the social environment, uncontrolled use of natural resources and unruly social order. In the process of comprehensively deepening the reform in China, issues such as ecological deterioration and food safety all call for efforts to make individuals' sense of social responsibility more prominent. Therefore, systematic thinking is urgently needed to improve individuals' sense of social responsibility.

### **1.4 The Cultivation of Sense of Social Responsibility Requires Theoretical Guidance**

Thoughts determine action. Without scientific thoughts as guidance or correct theoretical guidance, people may turn to blind action and deviate from the right direction. Fostering individuals' sense of social responsibility,

enriching their recognition of social responsibility, strengthening individual's feelings towards social responsibility, consolidating individuals' will of fulfilling social responsibility and sparking the initiative and activity of individuals to fulfill their social responsibility demand systematic work and guidance of scientific theories. Sense of social responsibility is an objective requirement posed by the human society for individuals and proves indispensable for the development of modern education. *Guideline on Medium- and Long-Term Educational Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)* issued by China points out that efforts should be made to improve students' sense of social responsibility of serving the country and the people, daring innovation and practical abilities of solving problems. The report of the 18th CPC National Congress also highlighted the need to "foster students' sense of social responsibility", which fully reflects the great importance attached by the Party and the government to the cultivation of young people's sense of social responsibility. The Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee proposed that we need to "deepen the educational reform and enhance students' sense of social responsibility, innovation and practical abilities as a key task throughout the improvement of national education." However, for a long time, moral education in schools still lacks innovation in its modes and proves too idealistic in terms of educational goals with inadequate specific goals. In the process of education, appropriate atmosphere and practical interaction are not in place and teenagers also lack self-awareness, which have made the cultivation of sense of responsibility face serious challenges. With the rapid transformation of the Chinese society and the rise of the Internet-based society, only by upholding Marxist materialism as a fundamental principle and the socialist core value system can provide scientific and theoretical guidance for improving individuals' sense of social responsibility based on exploring the transformation trajectory of individuals' social responsibility and ethical spirits, consolidating the current achievements and summarizing the features of the era. Only through scientific theoretical guidance can we understand the process and laws of the formation of sense of social responsibility more accurately, grasp the historical characteristics and contemporary characteristics of sense of social responsibility more clearly and summarize the principles and methods of fostering the quality training more scientifically.

## 2. VALUE OF THE RESEARCH ON SENSE OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

### 2.1 Theoretical Value

A. It can help deepen the understanding of sense of social responsibility. Most of the current research on social

responsibility focuses on corporate social responsibility while only a few are related to individuals' sense of social responsibility. Therefore, systematic research on the "sense of social responsibility" of individuals in the public life of modern Chinese is conducive to deepening the understanding of sense of social responsibility. In addition, most of the previous studies focused on the research of individuals' sense of social responsibility while only a few focus on individuals' sense of social responsibility with inadequate understandings and conflicting views of the connotation, characteristics and development rules of the sense of social responsibility. The cultivation of the sense of social responsibility is conducive to promoting the development of individual moral quality, facilitating the in-depth development of social moral governance and facilitating the practice of socialist core values. Therefore, comprehensive improvement of the basic concepts, realistic features, influential factors and cultivation goals of individual's "sense of social responsibility" is conducive to deepening the theoretical understanding of "sense of social responsibility." Based on the improvement, solid theoretical foundation and effective approaches to cultivating individuals' sense of social responsibility in the new era can be explored to promote the progress of research on the field.

B. It can enrich the theory of fostering individuals' sense of social responsibility. The cultivation of the sense of social responsibility is a form of activity that organically combines regularity and purposefulness. This regularity should be tested in real-life practice. The research focuses on risks generated by individuals' lack of sense of social responsibility, influential factors of sense of social responsibility and the cultivation goal of sense of social responsibility, objectively and logically exploring the cultivation theory of modern people's sense of social responsibility. Therefore, we need to focus on the theory of people's development with Chinese characteristics, the transformation of China's excellent traditional culture in the modern society, the practical thinking of how people exist and the conflicts between people's spiritual life of growing quality accompanied by their free and all-round development and requirements on their quality and the status quo of their sense of social responsibility in the current society. We also need to conduct in-depth research on the cultivation of individuals' sense of social responsibility which can be conducive to enriching the theory of fostering people's sense of social responsibility.

### 2.2 Practical Value

A. The problems of individuals' sense of social responsibility need to be revealed. The sense of social responsibility is moral consciousness of modern people, which is not simply infusing or imposing any existed thoughts or standards of behavior on individuals but self-regulation and self-development based on the needs of the society they live in. Therefore, we need to objectively

analyze the status quo of individuals' sense of social responsibility in the new era, reveal the problems of the quality in the new era and find out the influential factors to provide scientific evidence for solving the practical problems of sense of social responsibility in the new era based on the reality, the conditions of the new era and what is expected, practical and indispensable for fostering the sense of social responsibility in the new era.

B. It is conducive to improving the level of fostering people's sense of social responsibility. The cultivation of the quality should be launched in people's daily lives. Therefore, we need to improve the level of fostering people's sense of social responsibility by establishing a clear-cut and practical cultivation system compatible with the new era and coordinated with the rule of law in China and its excellent moral traditions and culture. Through the social guidance of fostering the sense of social responsibility, making schools play a leading role in the cultivation, putting institutional guarantee in place for fostering the quality and improving individuals' awareness of social responsibility quality cultivation, we can comprehensively improve the cultivation level of modern people's "sense of social responsibility".

---

## REFERENCES

---

- Anonymous. (2016). Core qualities of the development of Chinese students. *Journal of the Chinese Society of Education*, (10), 1-3.
- Hu, X. Z. (2009). *Promoting the unity of instrumental and value rationality and fostering talents with high sense of social responsibility*. Beijing Forum (2009) Harmony and Common Prosperity of Civilization - Challenges posed by Crisis, Reflection and Harmonious Development, (11), 190.
- Lawson. (1996). Moral education in Chinese schools from the perspective of global moral education evolution. *Contemporary Youth Research*, (5), 2.
- Milne, A. J. M. (1997). *Human Rights and Human Diversity: An Essay in the Philosophy of Human Rights* (p.57), In Y. Xia, & Z. M. Zhang, (Trans.). Beijing: China Encyclopedia Publishing House.
- Su, L. (2009). *Investigation and analysis of the awareness of youth citizens on responsibility and thinking on Chinese education*. Nanchang: Jiangxi Normal University.
- Xue, D. Z. (2005). *Human philosophy* (p.230). Beijing: People's Publishing House.