

The Contemporary Issues in Chinese Education

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Abstract: Over the past few decades, the Chinese education system has undergone significant changes, influenced by a number of social, economic, and political factors. This paper provides an analysis of contemporary issues in Chinese education, highlighting key challenges and proposing solutions. A major concern is the intense pressure placed on students to excel academically, which results in high levels of stress and mental health problems. A competitive examination system and societal expectations of success are responsible for this pressure. Additionally, the rigid curriculum and emphasis on ranking have been criticized as stifling the development of cooperative and creative skills. It is underway to reform the curriculum and teaching methods, but progress in reducing academic pressure and promoting innovation in education is inconclusive. While Chinese education faces a number of contemporary challenges, efforts are being made to address these challenges and improve its overall quality and equity. It will be necessary to maintain a sustained commitment and implement innovative strategies to achieve meaningful progress over the next few years.

Keywords: Motivation, Cooperative mindsets, Practical skills, Pressure, Chinese education.

1. Introduction

Education is a crucial component of societal development, serving as the foundation for future generations to develop their potential and contribute to global progress. The Chinese education system is currently faced with a number of challenges that affect students' experiences and academic performance. The Chinese education system places a high value on academic achievement, and schools place an excessive amount of emphasis on encouraging students to achieve good grades, neglecting to emphasize the importance of developing practical skills and inspiring a passion for learning. As a result, students may feel that academic coursework is a burden and lose motivation to succeed in their academic endeavors, they perceive their classmates as opponents and will have difficulty working cooperatively with one another, and academic experience can prepare students for college entrance exams but may not prepare them for future employment opportunities. The purpose of this essay is to discuss the critical issues confronting Chinese education.

2. Intensive Study Schedules

"Most schools start from early morning (about 7:30 a.m.) to early evening (about 6 pm) with a 2 hour lunch break. Many schools have evening self-study classes running from 7 p.m.-9 p.m. so students can finish their homework and prepare for endless tests. If schools do not run self-study evening classes, students still have to do their homework at home, usually up to 10 p.m. On average, a primary school pupil spends about seven to eight hours at school whilst a secondary school student spends about twelve to fourteen hours at school if including lunchtime and evening classes. Due to the fierce competitiveness to get into good universities, the pressure to do well for Gao Kao is intense. Many schools hold extra morning classes in science and math for three to four hours on Saturdays. If schools do not have Saturday morning classes, most parents would send their children to expensive cramming schools at weekends or organize one-to-one private tuition for their children over the weekend "[1]. In China,

students strive to obtain a competitive score on the college entrance exams since it is the ticket to a bright future. As a result, many Chinese students spend long hours studying and attending cram classes. Devote the most energetic and vigorous period of their life to studying subjects that do not even appeal to them. As a consequence, students are frequently exhausted and stressed by their studies, sacrificing other aspects of their lives, causing some students to become resentful of their studies. Examination pressure can lead to a feeling of overwhelm and even depression among students. It is not unprecedented for students to commit suicide before the college entrance examination when they are unable to cope with the pressure. There is no doubt that examinations are very important. It is a method of evaluating the results of learning, however, it should not be the primary objective of learning. Education is intended to enhance the knowledge and skills necessary to realize personal value. Throughout the learning process, it is important to recognize one's strengths and make use of them in order to achieve success academically and professionally and eventually to contribute positively to society. If teenagers spend endless hours studying and taking exams without being passionate about the subject, it seems unlikely that this will facilitate their personal growth.

3. Deficiency of Cooperative Mentalities

It is worth mentioning that education in China is primarily focused on examinations and academic performance. Students who obtain high grades will have access to more resources and better choices as well as be appreciated and respected by their teachers and peers. This makes ranking one of the most pertinent criteria for evaluating study results. Students are ranked according to their academic performance even in elementary schools. Consequently, students perceive their classmates as opponents rather than partners. The emphasis on "competition" in the early school years will continue to influence students' perceptions of their classmates even as they enter college. In addition, most K-12 education in China places more emphasis on delivering lectures than on

student collaboration and participation. Class activities are infrequent, and students are primarily trained to gain knowledge rather than skills. Insufficient training can negatively impact students' teamwork skills. Collaboration is imperative. Ineffective cooperation can have serious repercussions for a person's social relationships and, under more severe circumstances, may result in violent or even committed crimes. Those who lack a sense of cooperation and are self-centered may retaliate against others by using extreme actions if they cannot outperform their competition. For example, a student at a top university in China poisoned and killed his roommate because his grades were not as good as the victim's. The famous psychotherapist Alfred Adler suggested in his book that one way to prevent crime is to inculcate the importance of cooperation in students as they are being educated and to encourage them to become interested in others. People are motivated to contribute to others and society when they have a cooperative mindset and community awareness. On the contrary, when people focus on winning over others, they neglect others' strengths and miss out on opportunities to learn from them. This can lead to excessive competition, poor communication, conflict escalation, and disruptive and stressful work environments. In the long term, personal and community development can be stifled. Cooperative mindsets are essential for a healthy and productive work environment. When individuals work together, they are able to share resources, knowledge, and skills, creating a stronger and more resilient community. Collaboration environments can foster a sense of support and appreciation among participants, as well as inspire them to achieve their full potential. However, it is unlikely to occur if we continue to rank them according to their academic performance at school and train them to compete against one another.

4. Inadequate Skill Development

Additionally, even if they are successful in breaking through the fierce competition during the college entrance exam, many students are unable to identify a specific area of passion during their university studies. Many college students do not know what they want to do in life; their future careers often differ from the majors they choose in college. Many college students change majors frequently and struggle to find their place in a foggy future. Educating students is not only about imparting knowledge but also about preparing them for their future careers. "Students who discover academic interests in high school and college are better prepared for satisfying careers. Interest is a powerful motivational process that energizes learning and guides academic and career trajectories[2]." The identification of interests at an early age allows students to make informed decisions regarding their future. This can be done by providing students with the opportunity to explore different subjects and encouraging them to pursue what they're passionate about. The uniform method of lecturing may not be effective for inspiring every student's academic potential.

Education should prepare students for a wide range of life skills, including problem-solving abilities, independent thinking skills, communication skills, teamwork skills, adaptability, etc. Inadequate skill development can leave graduates unprepared for the challenges of modern society. This may also limit the career opportunities available to students. Employers often seek candidates who are capable of applying their knowledge proficiently to a variety of jobs.

Ginni Rometty, the CEO of IBM insists, "Getting a job at today's IBM does not always require a college degree." According to Jeff Weiner of LinkedIn, "What matters most (in today's workforce) are relevant skills[3]." Students who graduate with high academic records but lack the practical skills necessary for success in the workplace may have difficulty finding employment or perform unsatisfactorily in their careers. The importance of developing skills in education cannot be overstated. As students become more aware of the benefits of critical thinking and interpersonal skills, and develop a strong sense of self-confidence and self-esteem, they will be able to work better with others, which will ultimately lead to a more cohesive and altruistic community.

It is evident that traditional teaching methods could be improved, and lectures should be conducted in a more constructive manner to pass on knowledge. Schools in Finland do not have examinations and competitions. They cultivate the most competitive students in the least hostile environment. Instead of restricting children with rules and regulations, educators incorporate practice and application into the classroom to develop pupils' abilities and inspire their intrinsic passion. It is necessary for education to be creative and innovative. The courses can be designed in a project-based learning approach, which combines lectures and practice sessions. In this manner, students are able to develop knowledge and skills through hands-on experience. It reduces the stress caused by examinations and also allows them to foster skills that are essential to the subject area. Additionally, students should have the opportunity to explore a variety of topics and find their areas of interest. Everyone is endowed with different strengths. It is crucial for educators to guide students toward positions that will maximize their potential.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, Chinese schools are experiencing significant problems caused by excessive academic pressure, rigid teaching methods, and insufficient practical skills development. School is not only a place for students to achieve academic success but also to gain guidance for the future. A student should find their passion in life, develop self-confidence and self-esteem, and learn how to work with others in order to contribute positively to society. "The theoretical knowledge of skill-based subjects needs to be supported by practice. Subjects like teaching and engineering are skill-based. In these subjects, practical knowledge is more important than theoretical knowledge. Practical work includes experiments in laboratories, study tours, projects, assignments, etc. The advantages of practical work are unmatched. Getting theoretical knowledge has no value until students can apply it for practical purposes[4]." Practical skills training and interest development are essential components of education, which can be achieved through innovative teaching methods and more effective curriculum designs. Diverse teaching methods and classroom activities are essential to enriching knowledge and developing students' abilities. Academic success depends on students being enthusiastic about learning and taking responsibility for their own education, rather than being subjected to external pressures.

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