

Enlightenment from the Negative Influences of Exam-Oriented Education on Chinese High School Students: Backwash from Classroom to Child

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Abstract. Exam-oriented education has been formulated in China for decades, which objectively urged students, parents and teachers to attach importance to the course learning. However, more and more focusing on exams in education generates some negative influences. By applying interviews and questionnaires, the negative influences of exam-oriented education appear strikingly. For one aspect, people should not deny and complain about exam-oriented exam completely. On the other hand, teachers and educators should cast about more positive resolutions so as to maximize the quality of education on the base of maintaining exams as the main testing method in schools.

1. Introduction

Exams appear from ancient times at home and abroad. It comes into being as an accompanying part for education. Exam plays an important role in knowledge acquiring and talents selection. As for holistic education, general knowledge acquiring is the exam content. As for talents selection, the exam is to screen the better from the good. It is competitive. Nowadays, especially the recent decades, it is in a predicament because of the exam-oriented education and the conception of the teachers, parents and students. Some prefer exam-oriented education because they trust exam is a peaceful way to outstand the better within a certain group. Others think exams make students, teachers and parents struggle for higher and higher scores. Thus, the education system may not aim at students' quality, but at developing their ability to perform well on exams. One study named *The Negative Influences of Exam-Oriented Education on Chinese High School Students: Backwash from Classroom to Child* was written by Robert Kirkpatrick and Yuebing Zang, which was published in *Language Testing in Asia*, 2011, 1(3). Robert Kirkpatrick has a Ph.D. from Curtin University of Technology (Perth) and was an associate professor at Kumamoto Prefectural University. Yuebing Zang was a student studying in the Master of Education (Teaching English as an International Language) at Shinawatra International University, Thailand.

The article describes the various problems China faces on account of its exam-centric education system and pedagogy. Through interviews and surveys, the article explores the policy arguments, key assumptions underlying the pedagogical approach, and the negative influence exam-oriented education systems have on Chinese students[1]. After discussion, the article concludes that moderate pressure better motivates students and improves student success and psychological health, both in terms of academic success and also productive adulthood.

The article had 20 references as its academic background, the layout with headings like introduction, varied views on the exam system backwash, the role of exam in the Chinese education system, overview of high school students in China, results and discussion, and conclusion. The article presented the exam system backwash and the role of exams in the Chinese educational system through sufficient literature review. The article verified to its readers the negative influences of exam-oriented education in China from the specific survey in Yunnan province No. 10 School.

2. Discussions

This study is about the negative influence of exam-oriented education on Chinese high school students. The methodological approaches include literature review, questionnaire, results and

discussion. The following is about the originality, rigors and credibility of the methodological approaches. I will analyze the details from two aspects: pros and cons.

Firstly, I will comment on the cons of this study. In terms of rigors, there are some incorrectness. For example, there is one sentence on the top of page 5 “High school teachers teach often completely ignore a student’s creativity or ability to reason abstractly.”. In this sentence, the predicate is not definite. It might be to “teach” or “ignore”. In the appendix, question 8 is “Do you think is that right about rank by score?”. The meaning is not clearly expressed. It is not proper especially when such expression appears in the questionnaire. It may influence the validity of the questionnaire. In terms of rigors, there are some cases of using absolute vocabulary. For example, “solely” is used at the very beginning of the article. “only” is used at least three times on page 3 and page 4. “completely” is used on page 5. In terms of rigors, there are some inaccurately quoted expressions. For example, there is one statement “Indeed, Chinese formal education emphasizes testing beginning at age two.” When I retrieved the source essay (Nicholas Kristofk, 2011), I found two cases mentioning age 2: “I’ll never forget pulling our 2-year-old son out of his Tokyo nursery school ...” and “excellent early childhood education, typically beginning at age 2”[2]. Obviously, the original sentence is the second one. It has no trace of testing. It is not formal education either. It is a typical one, a special example. As far as I know, few Chinese parents start kids education from the age of two. Normally, three years old is the beginning of Kindergarten. What’s more, kids are mostly adapting, playing, formulating living habits during the first two years of kindergarten. Testing is too formal to be used among kids. On page three, one sentence lists the six subjects in Chinese high schools as “... namely history, geography, politics, physical science, biology, physical education, music, and fine arts” According to the official documents, 3+X system piloted from 1999[3]. The six subjects in Chinese high schools include history, geography, politics, and physical science, chemistry, biology. This article published in 2011. Some data about China education had already changed. For example, It is not “only a small cohort of junior school studies continues their formal education in senior secondary schools...”. It is 60% of junior school students to continue their formal education in senior middle school. Next year, the proportion will be adjusted as 5:5. It means 50% junior school students enter senior middle school, while the other 50% will choose technical schools.

Now the pros should be the focus. The layout is clearly arranged. There is a standard formal format I can learn, namely title – authors – abstract – keywords -article – references – appendix. As for the article itself, the author guided readers step by step to the core point and finally presented discussion and conclusion. There are two parts of the literature review: “Varied Views on the Exam System Backwash” and “The Role of Exams in the Chinese Educational System”. Form the two parts, the authors drew a picture of the Chinese education phenomenon – Exam-oriented Educational System or Exam-oriented education[4]. The references are sufficient. It includes 20 items from various academic sources. All could be retrieved. I especially appreciate the Results and Discussion part. The originality is realized from an actual questionnaire conducted in Yunnan No. 10 Middle School which can support and prove the general picture drawn from the previous two parts. From the table, we can see clearly the percentage of Pro-exam student group and the percentage of the Anti-exam student group. The cheating percentage is very eye-catching. The 60% indicates the majority of students involved in the survey admit their cheating in exams. It should be a common phenomenon. It is from the voices of students and teachers. It is closely related to the extensive exam activity in the school. The school may represent the province, even the country of China. At the end of the article, the authors objectively conclude that the modern examination system of China is still the fairest way in the social competition. For example, the college entrance exams are widely approved in the whole society. However, China’s approach to education demands reforms. The suggestions provided in this part sound reasonable, such as guaranteeing educational equity, making reasonable educational policies, monitoring the performance and efficacy, changing the existing “standard answer-style” system, emphasizing all-round development in students, and recognizing students’ special individual talents and creativity[5]. The final pro is the questionnaire. To my understanding, the questionnaire is designed by the authors themselves. Whatever it is good

or not. It is original and authentic.

3. Enlightenments

From the study *The Negative Influences of Exam-Oriented Education on Chinese High School Students: Backwash from Classroom to Child*, it's time to realize that the negative influences of exam-driven education have already become a social problem. The government and educators must take it into consideration.

The solution should never be denying exam-oriented education completely or even cancel exam system. People should make clear of their awareness and put the problem into the current nationwide and international environment to consider. What are the advantages and what are the disadvantages? Why the disadvantages seem to surpass the advantages? Should the solution be to keep or delete? Is it possible to apply other modern and sufficient testing and evaluation methods?

In 2013, China started an overall reform on the college entrance exam system after the third plenary session of the 18th CPC central committee. As a pioneer course, college entrance examination English socialization test has been hotly discussed and trialed in mainland provinces and municipality cities. In such practice, exam keeps but it is no longer a lifelong decision. Hopefully, it may help offer ideas to solve the problem arisen in the study.

As for the exams in education, there are both standardized tests and standards-based tests. Exam types are various including aptitude tests, proficiency tests, placement tests, diagnostic tests, and achievement tests. Beside common exam types to assess general knowledge, competence and performance, nowadays there are some other alternatives to test students, such as portfolios, journals, conferences, observations, and self-and peer assessment. Educators and teachers should be encouraged to apply appropriate exam types for the specific circumstance with the precondition of students' holistic education.

4. Conclusion

With sufficient literature review and an empirical study, the study drew the common points through proper paraphrasing and citations and formulated the major argument. That is China has an exam-centric education system and pedagogy. It is popular and influential. The negative backwash of exam-oriented education is more and more acknowledged by experts and common people. The questionnaire survey is of strong support. Thus, the article concluded the necessity to reform and improve the present education system so as to assist the all-round development students, to cultivate individual talents and creativity, to foster scientific learning attitude and self-assessment, finally to motivate students academic success, psychological health, and also productive adulthood.

In terms of academic writing and research writing, the originality is the core. Without originality, the paper will be meaningless. Equally important constituent will be the rigor of the writing. Quotation and citation with personal bias will break the essay's rigor. Only with the originality, rigors and credibility of the methodological approaches, can writing become an academic work. Similarly, the exam is the core of education. Without exams, educators will teach blindly because they may not know whether the objectives achieve. Without exams, the talents will not be selected for the proper social positions. Without exams, education will look like a mess-hall food so that people's enthusiasm and positivity will have perished. Thus, exams in education must be kept although there are obvious negative influences people claim. What educators should devote working on is to cast about for more positive resolutions so as to maximize the quality of education, since the variety of exam forms is developing such as portfolio and more methods beyond tests.

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