

The Difference between Chinese and Western Education

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Speaking of the difference between Chinese and western education, there is no doubt that each system has its own characteristics.

1. Emphasis: Memorization vs Innovation

Rote learning plays an important role in Chinese education system, with the distinctive emphasis on memorization. For most subjects, usually the teachers will give lectures and ask the students to write down the notes, sometimes the students have to recite the words and texts after class. Speaking of homework, copying new words is more common for Chinese and English classes, rather than practical activity. And this is the reason why Chinese students learn English for many years but have problem in the real communication.

Problem solving and case study are often involved in western schools, instead of note-taking and repetition. Western classes offer more room for discussion and practice, so that they could apply what they've learned to real situation, rather than on the paperwork. The western teaching method is way more innovative.

2. Working Style: Collaboratively vs Independently

Chinese students are good at group working, and it has a lot to do with the traditional Chinese culture of collectivism. Under the Chinese education system, students are collective-oriented, and tend to work hard and give back to the family and society in the future. For group work, the success of the group is more important than individual achievements.

In western education, independent thinking is highly valued, even when it comes to group work. Students are encouraged to be more creative, so they have more opportunities to express themselves. Meanwhile, western students are expected to get each of them involved in the learning process, and make progress together.

3. Way of Learning: Teacher Guided vs Student Led

When mentioning the way of learning, the most obvious characteristic of Chinese education must be the teacher-guided learning style among most Chinese schools. It's a rude way to disagree with teachers, or challenge them. In recent years, even though student-oriented method is suggested, the class is still led by the teacher.

Way of learning in the western schools is just on the contrary. Discussion is more common than lecture from the teacher, and students are encouraged to challenge the teacher if they have different opinions. The class is not driven by the teacher, but the students.

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4. Assessment: Test Scores vs Coursework Marks

Assessment in Chinese schools is all about exams. Believe or not, grade is the most effective way to assess a student's performance at school. No matter teachers, parents or students, exam score is their biggest concern, because only if the students get good scores, they could go to an ideal university and have a brighter future.

But in western education, test score and coursework mark are both valued. When it comes to university entrance, there are other requirements, rather than exam score only, which is really different from the college entrance examination in China ("Gaokao").

5. Extracurricular Class: For the Test vs Based on Interests

Chinese students work really hard for a good test result, they start learning in the early morning and finish late at night. A lot of students in China take extracurricular classes after school hour, or during weekends and vacations, mostly for boosting the test performance. Some students begin to take extracurricular classes as long as they go to primary school, and continue to high school. In these years, more and more students take extracurricular classes like music, dancing and plenty more activities, for an all-round development.

Unlike the main point of extracurricular class, students in western countries who really struggle the test will take extra class. For others, they take part in classes and activities based on their interests.

6. Family Education: Restrained vs Encouraging

Family education in China is restrained. Parents always ask their children to focus on the study, and they expect their children to get good test scores. It seems like study is the most important thing for students, no matter at school or at home. In addition, some Chinese parents seldom give compliments to their children, because they believe that their kids will do better by this way.

Western parents prefer an encouraging way, they appraise their children way more frequently than Chinese parents. And test score won't be their biggest concern.