

Educational Objectives and Student Management Methods in International High Schools in China

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Abstract:

Much attention has been given to the challenges and complexities of international education in China. However, there are a lot of areas that have not been fully explored, especially regarding achieving the right blend of globalization and traditional education. This paper examines the development of international high school education in China the changes in educational models, the unique features of international curricula, and the effects of recent policy changes. In the study, it is also found that seemingly beneficial attempts at global citizenship and critical thinking provided by international education introduce a high level of stress originating from conflicting academic requirements and inflexible educational frameworks. Considering the results obtained, the following recommendations have been formulated to improve the situation regarding the development of international education in China. These include balancing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for the students, strengthening their mental health and academic support services, reducing workload for students, and ensuring more time for students. If these challenges are addressed, China can equip students to fit the world that is shifting towards globalization.

Keywords: International education; Chinese education policy; student stress; global citizenship; educational reform

1. Introduction

International education has long been a popular choice among wealthy families, sending their children to foreign countries for advanced-level education. Additionally, the increase in trend of globalization across the world is currently on the rise, especially in certain areas within China, leading to a rapid growth in the number of international schools around these areas. However, the massive and yet expanding market has eventually led to the exposure of some challenges to be addressed.

In China, international education primarily operates through two distinct models: private international high schools and international divisions within public schools. Although these models are based on international curricula, the sort of difficulties that the models have is due to their integration into the overall educational system of China. Unlike public schools, private international schools provide students with more options through flexibility and focusing on the student's needs throughout the process of schooling. On the other hand, international divisions in public schools that teach international curricula maintain the strict discipline and traditional learning approaches characteristic of China's public schools.

As much as these educational models--appear to have clear advantages--also face major challenges. They include the concerns of meeting the requirements of international and national standards, the impact of recent education policies, and psychological and academic pressure on students. These are the questions this paper seeks to answer; the circumstances under which these challenges arise and ultimately, how the challenges may be addressed in the pursuit of the development of international education in China.

2. The Current Situation and Future Aim of International Education in China

2.1 The Evolution of International Education

International high school education in China not only reflects the developmentalism and purpose of international education but also meets globalization and growing internationalization. The increase of new international high schools in China not only offers new choices for domestic elite families to pursue education in China but also reflects the evolution and opening-up of the Chinese education system in the process of globalization [1].

But, since the 1980s with the progress of China's opening up and the growth of its economy, people have begun to focus on the concept of international education. Chinese international high schools generally fall into two categories: the independent private international schools, and the international divisions in the public schools. These two forms of schools differ in their educational goals and directions on how they deal with the students. International high schools are mostly independent schools that follow the Western system in their education delivery to develop students who are intellectually, physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually fit as well as a system in which education is provided based on individual needs. Such schools have a relatively liberal and broad curriculum that in one way, offers learners a lot of freedom in choosing classes; participation in co-curricular activities is also highly encouraged [2]. To this end, the purpose of this educational model is to foster the student's ability to learn on their own and to think universally to enable them to fit well into the future international society and occupational world.

Yet, the international departments in public schools are somehow more closely related to traditional Chinese education in terms of educational aims and management systems. However, all these schools are still following the management system of Chinese public schools as they offer international curricula. Thus, students experience a great amount of academic stress, and discipline and academic achievement at the schools are high: more time for tutorials and strict timetables for learning are the norm [3]. In general, the development and the diversification of high school education in internationalized China reflects the nature of the Chinese education system as rich and diverse [4]. In the future, these two educational models may absorb more diversified educational needs and remain the international standard of Chinese education.

2.2 Key Features of International Education

Specific features of international education are revealed in its reaction to globalization tendencies and in the development of multicultural education. Such educational model often uses international curricula such as IBDP, CIE, or AP in the USA that aim to prepare the students with factual knowledge, critical thinking, and global perspective [5]. Also, international education focuses on the English language as the means of communication in class, which not only enables the learners to converse in the international market but also sets a good linguistic model for the learners especially when they are admitted to top universities across the globe. Another major difference that can be noticed between the international and the traditional types of education is the language used in teaching the learners.

However, there is another principle of international education which is openness of the methods used and encouraging student's independence. Unlike the Chinese educational system where the teacher controls the educational process and the teaching process is formalized with an emphasis on tests, international education means a personalized approach and active development of the child's creativity. The students get more options in terms of choosing different subjects and schools offer greater number of co-curricular activities for the complete growth of the child. This model of assessment used in international education is also slightly different from the conventional one, as it is more on formative assessments than terminal assessments, meaning that the students get time to realize their strengths and weaknesses and their areas of interest other than the class [6]. These features help in the process of internationalisation of education to develop students with innovative, problem-solving tendencies and an international outlook that will enable them to face future internationalized lives and careers.

2.3 The Role of International Education in Shaping Students

Therefore, international education is quite relevant to the process of students' development particularly in the perspectives of worldview formation and intercultural communication competence. That is why I personally think that in the course of globalization, one's personality should and must be backed up by a good education and, at the same time, the student should also be taught how to fit into the multicultural society. Since most of the international education curriculums are globally oriented and involve the use of different languages, cultures, and ethical values are learned by the students as they go through the various levels of the academic system [7]. On the same note, this education system helps the students to overcome geographical and cultural barriers which in turn helps in their global citizenship; it also helps them to think critically and systematically about world issues, which are vital in their anticipated international careers [8].

Also, international education helps the student in the development of his or her individual and overall quality. Unlike the traditional systems of learning which is more focused on the academic achievement of the students, the system of international education focuses on aspects such as critical thinking, creativity, learning on our own, teamwork among others. Through participation in various activities and an array of co- and extra-curricular activities, as well as community service activities and interdisciplinary projects students foster the skills of leadership and problem-solving. The assessment regulation in international education has one significant characteristic: process

evaluation and reflective skills that help the students to develop. These characteristics lay the foundation to achieve academic success and at the same time teach the children how to handle their feelings and accept responsibilities as future leaders of the world [9].

3. Problems and Their Consequences

3.1 Impact of Policies

The trend of the policies on international high schools in China has raised several questions and effects on the field of international education. First, several strict changes in the education system have been carried out by the Chinese government in the last few years, including the ‘double reduction’ policy and the control of private and international schools. These policies are used in order to support learners, minimize the importance of supplementary classes, and address the issue of educational equality. However, many adverse effects have been reported concerning the process of its adoption as well.

However, the “double reduction” policy has also brought about some effects: although it has to some extent reduced the academic pressure on students, it has also led to other issues. Since the government has banned extra academic lessons, parents have sought other ways such as enrolling their children in expensive private tutors or International schools to ease the burden of extra lessons. This shift has not only increased the social divide but has also increased the pressure in the students and parents’ minds as they feel that they may be left behind in this competitive race of Gaokao--the college entrance examination. In addition, this policy has discouraged students from preparing for foreign language and international exams and the students who are willing to study abroad [10].

Another element is that from the 2021 the “Regulations on the Implementation of the Law on the Promotion of Private Education” have been adopted to limit foreign investment in the international schools, especially at the stage of compulsory education. This policy aims at protecting the sovereignty of the country’s education as well as determine the extent to which education content is in line with the national standards. However, this has created a problem for many private international schools that rely on foreign investment and international cooperation in the areas of finance and management. This does not only limit the curriculum options as well as the quality of education but it may also lead to the reduction of the number of international schools which will somehow limit the chances of Chinese students to get international education [11].

3.2 Student Stress and Wellbeing

Stress and well-being of students in Chinese international

high schools have become an issue of interest in the recent past and are linked to China’s education system and policies. In particular, the ‘double reduction’ policy has slightly alleviated the academic pressure on students. As though, several new challenges have arisen in the practice of the above stated principles. For instance, while the policy has cut the time that students spend in extracurricular tutoring, this reduction also denies the students the chance to improve their grades through extra learning especially for those students who are preparing to sit for foreign language and international exams to get into top foreign universities. Therefore, parents to ensure that their children are competitive, put them through expensive private tutoring or even enrol them in international schools hence increasing the burden on the students and the families [12]. On the same note, students in international schools have pressure in two folds. On one side, they have to conform to the international curricula which entails a lot of work and different forms of evaluations. On the other hand, they have expectations and pressures from families and other important people in their lives that come from their cultural background where Gaokao is viewed as a determiner of success and families have high expectations of their children’s academic performance. This has led to many of the students, especially those in the university, developing cases of anxiety, depression and other mental health issues but when such students require support from their schools they are not in a position to offer such support. These problems do not only affect the academic achievement of the learners but also cause severe adverse effects on the learners’ quality of life [13].

3.3 Studying and Academics

The major academic issues or difficulties faced by students in Chinese international high schools are as a result of diverse curriculum and academic stress. First of all, several international curriculum systems like IB, A-level, and AP are introduced to the students and therefore they have to solve more complex and diverse academic problems. These curricula are not only to teach the students certain amount of knowledge but also expect students to develop critical thinking, research skills, and the ability to learn on their own. Still, for many traditional Chinese students, who have previous academic training in the traditional education system, mastering such forms is not easy: Some lose direction and struggle during exams, thus, they cannot give their best [14].

Moreover, the students in the international high schools encounter yet another problem originating from the conflict of academic systems. On the one hand, they are required to meet the curricula of the foreign educational systems with a view of meeting the admission criteria of

the foreign universities. They also have the stress of the Chinese education system and the Gaokao which only enhances their stress on the academic part. Most learners are caught in between two school timetables and the time they spend on each system is usually very limited and this affects their overall performance and learning. These two forms of pressure are in a way that causes mental and academic conflict and most students may find it difficult to manage between the two [15].

4. Suggestions

4.1 Adaptations in Student Motivation

In the flexible learning environment characterizing private international schools, students' intrinsic motivation is all important. Fields of one's choice, creative endeavors, and activities that a child enjoys being involved in are all encouraged since this helps them to develop a love for learning as well as to grow. Such an environment ensures and fosters intrinsic motivation by enabling the students to take charge of their learning and development concerning the current trends of producing independent thinkers in the global world.

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation has more influence on the international divisions of public schools. They can be characterized by such features as emphasis on academic performance and adherence to a rigorous timetable which align with the Chinese model of education. In this case, motivation by external rewards such as high grades, recognition, and future opportunities are aspects that are most considered. However, this focus can make students strive academically, but the fear is that this approach removes the motivational elements that come with choice and autonomy for students when learning. Thus, by identifying and achieving a proper mix of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, such schools are beneficial for the overall students' development and morale.

4.2 Enhancements in Current Student Support and Services

It is crucial to intensify and further the services, which could contribute to students' mental health and learning outcomes. It is recommended that schools create Mental Health Counseling Centers with personnel who can attend to the needs of students with or without any crisis. Ideally, these centers should also provide access to crisis intervention services as well as other services required to provide additional psychological support after a crisis has passed. Furthermore, academic support services should be strengthened by establishing centers where learners can get assistance in their learning processes during extra learning hours. Such centers can be useful for learners

who require extra clarification of content or who desire to develop a better learning approach. Other ways of easing academic pressure involve encouraging composite and relaxed learning methods, such as group learning and project-based learning.

5. Conclusion

Concerns and issues of how students should be educated are well captured in the structure of international education in China, especially regarding freedom and order. Most private international schools adopt student-centered learning approaches that encourage students' freedom and flexibility, as compared to public school international divisions that are relatively more disciplined. These differences highlight the conflicting tension between Chinese education's ethos and the global influence on China's education system, which is gradually being transformed.

On the one hand, attending an international school and obtaining education in China provides learners with diverse and global opportunities. On the other hand, there are difficulties that should be taken into account. This paper helps the reader understand the effects of the "double reduction" policy as a reduction of pressure in academics that has had impacts that require careful consideration. More effort should be placed on how students can cope with both the international and domestic standards of schooling.

To maintain the progress of international education in China and to foster a sense of global responsibility among learners, it is important to pay more attention to students' psychological and academic demands. In this way, China can further develop its international education sector and keep on expanding the provision of high-quality education that is increasingly necessary to meet the growing needs of students, who live in a constantly more globally interconnected world.

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