

Mechanical Teaching In Chinese Universities

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At present the general condition in Chinese universities is wonderfully mechanical. On the one hand, the students have to accomplish certain courses within four years. They live according to the ringing of the bell. Outside the class they read a few pages of lecture notes, and easily pass the examinations. On the other hand, the professors receive the engagements of the school authorities, spend a few hours in teaching, and receive certain salaries. Some of them prepare a little material. Some of them even repeat the lecture notes which have been used for ten or twenty years. Such mechanical teaching, I dare say, is entirely useless, especially to the college students.

First, there is no close relation between the professors and the students. They meet only in the classroom. They are mutually indifferent. Sometimes, when they meet on the way, they remain strangers, even intentionally turning their faces or looking upon the ground. Teaching, under this condition, has transformed education into commerce. The professors, as the hired employees, have not any comfort besides getting salaries. The students learn from the professors as though from merchants of knowledge. Among them there is not found what is called "the mutual influence of personality." The great part of time is spent in reading lecture notes and preparing for examinations. Consequently college life becomes dull and monotonous.

Second, we should take care of the students' natural talent and interest. So far as education is concerned, this is a good principle because the students who are different in their national faculties should be educated in different ways. But in China we fail to carry out this principle. The professors always treat them as a whole body and teach them with the same and constant method. For instance, if we were the freshmen in the college of arts or college of law we should study logic. I believe many students do not like to study logic, though against their inclination they are forced to study it in order to be promoted to a higher class. When the teacher is teaching logic in the classroom they are always absentminded. They come to the classroom only for the purpose of answering roll calls. It is evident, for them to study logic is a waste of time. I do not mean that logic is useless, but that the students may have the freedom of selecting the course which they prefer. Let them be well developed in accordance with their own taste and talent. This is the most important point which we have neglected at present.

Third, in Chinese universities, we can seldom see the practice of free study among the students. Free study is a most excellent method of pursuing knowledge. It is highly esteemed in European countries, universities like Oxford, Cambridge, Paris, Harvard are famous as the most preeminent and influential universities in the world. In those universities free study is prevalent. What is the condition in China? We almost pay much attention to the examinations. We spend much time in the classroom, de-

vouring one or two voluminous text books. It is no wonder that we are so far behind them in literature, sociology, philosophy, especially in natural science.

In my opinion, first, the students should spend few hours in the classroom. They should devote themselves to free study, outside the class. The important duty of the professors is to introduce the reference books and to show the most intelligent method in learning. Second, it is advisable to establish the tutorial system as in Oxford or Cambridge, i.e. each student selects a professor as his leader, whom he thinks the most admirable. He takes counsels from him not only in learning but also in his conduct. Discussion, consultation, aid and debate are all necessary to increase the opportunities of exchange of knowledge.

In conclusion I may say that the students and the professors should abolish the mechanical teaching method, establish the tutorial system, pay much attention to free study outside the class, and in learning endeavor to be cooperative so that Chinese education may prove of practical value and help raise China to a position of influence in the world.

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