

Comparison of Education in China and America

Both the United States and China are seen as the world's top industrial nations. The US has the world's largest economy whereas China has the world's largest growing economy, which, at its current rate, will surpass that of the US within a few years. However, in the international mathematics and science testing, the scores of America are falling behind that of China by a large gap. Critics complain that the education in the US is far behind that of its other industrial nations, which is not entirely true. After examining the high school physics and chemistry textbooks, I have come to the conclusion that the low scores have more to do with the environment that students are brought up in and less to do with what is taught at school.

According to research, in the 1998 Third International Mathematics and Science Study, 14 out of 21 nations outscored the US in mathematics and 11 out of 21 nations outscored in the US in science as well. There is no doubt that the US is falling far behind in its education. I have been told that the curriculum in other countries is far tougher than that of the US, but after seeing a Chinese 10th grade physics textbook, and China being one of the top scoring countries in the international testing, it seems that the curriculum is about the same. They cover just about everything that American schools cover: Velocity and acceleration, the Newtonian laws of motion, the law of universal gravitation, work, energy, electricity, magnetism, and waves. There are a few topics that are covered in China that are not covered in the US. These are overweight and weightlessness, inertial and noninertial systems, curvilinear and circular motion, centripetal force and acceleration, and first, second, and third cosmic

velocity. Also, topics such as electricity, trigonometry and free falling diagrams, universal gravitation, magnetism, and heat are covered in much more detail. However, this is a 10th grade physics textbook and from what I was told, 9th grade physics is very easy and hardly covers much except light. There are topics which they do not cover that is covered in the United States, most notably, sound, gears, optics, and special relativity. Also, topics such as light and waves are covered in much greater detail in the United States. Wherever you heard that in 9th grade, Chinese students learn college physics, that's not true.

As stated earlier, the curriculum in China and the United States are practically the same, and if the curriculum in China is better, it is only by a little. In China, students take physics, chemistry, and biology every year in high school, but it is learned at a slower pace and the last year in high school is spent almost entirely on reviewing for the final national testing, meaning that no new material is covered. The main reason why scores are higher in China is because of the environment that students are brought up in. Students go to school at about 6 in the morning and return at about 6 in the afternoon. Then, they eat dinner and go back to school until about 10 at night. This adds up to about 14 to 15 hours of school and constant studying. In addition, competition is much more fierce in China than in the United States. At the end of elementary school, students take tests and those with the highest scores would go to the best middle schools. It is the same in middle schools where students with the best scores would go to the best high schools and students with the best high school scores would go to the best colleges. In order to get the best scores, students are

constantly pressured by their parents to do better. There is no doubt that Chinese students are under much more stress than American students. There are also different values between the United States and China. In the US, the philosophy is pretty much this: Do what you are good at and try your hardest. It is okay if you don't do well as long as you try your hardest, and always feel good about yourself. In China, it is this: Study, study, and study because education is more important than anything else; your other passions can wait. It is not okay if you're doing bad because that means you are not trying hard enough, despite whatever you say. Feel good about yourself only if you are doing excellent in school, otherwise feel terrible until you can be one of the top 10 students in your grade. That is how much pressure the students are under in China.

I think that the United States will never score high on the testing until they adopt the Chinese philosophy. Every single student has the potential to get straight A's and if they are not getting it, then they are simply not trying hard enough. If a person tries his hardest, he will not do badly. Also, I think that Americans students are made to feel too good about themselves, which prevents them from seeing the importance of doing good in school. American parents also tend to care less about their child's education and they tend to spoil their children a lot more. There is only one group of people in the American society that adopts the Chinese philosophy and those are the Asian Americans. Not surprisingly, they tend to do much better than Americans. It will be centuries until Americans are willingly to adopt this foreign philosophy.