

Selective Comparison of Chinese and American Secondary Education

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frank F. K. Chang was born in Peiping, China on July 6, 1926. He studied at Peiping Catholic University and National Sun Yat-sen University in Canton before he graduated from National Taiwan Normal University in 1950 with a degree of B. E.

He received a grant from the American State Department in 1966 and 1967 to study at the East-West Center, University of Hawaii majoring in Linguistics and Teaching Mandarin Chinese as A Second Language where he also taught Mandarin in the Department of Asian and Pacific Languages and completed his studies of Language Internship Program.

As a Linguist and Educator, he has been teaching English and Chinese languages for more than sixteen years on both middle school and university levels in the Republic of China and America. His bilingual Typical English Grammar published in Taiwan in the year of 1964 was selected to be used as a textbook supplement for many schools. Many of his articles were published in several leading newspapers and magazines in Taiwan and the United States during past years.

He has served as a Visiting Associate Professor and Curriculum Consultant of Asian Studies - Fulbright Lecturer - at the Montana State University System since 1969 and he received a degree of M. Ed. at Montana State University in Bozeman in 1971.

While he taught at Montana State University, his biography was selected to be included in the newly published Asian Who ? in America and East-West Who's Who in America.

Frank F. K. Chang is also the author of A Study On The Practical Aspect of Transformational Grammar.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Since 1949 Chinese Communists have occupied mainland China, and the entirely traditional system of education was destroyed by the new regime. On Taiwan, the government of the Republic of China has made rapid progress in recent years in the educational field.¹ Elementary school students in 1968 totaled 2,348,218. School attendance was 97.6 percent of the elementary age group, and 71.9 percent of elementary graduates entered secondary schools.² The government of China has extended its compulsory education from six years to nine years since August, 1968.

However, if we raise such questions to American educators and students, they seem to know nothing about them. On the other hand, if we raise some questions in China on the American educational system, perhaps with the exception of a few educators and experts who studied in America, most of the people also know nothing about them.

The writer, after a fourteen-month study in Hawaii at the University of Hawaii, and one year of study majoring in secondary education

¹Ministry of Education, *The Status of Teachers in Republic of China* (Taipei: Ministry of Education, 1969), p. 1.

²Wang Wei, *China Yearbook* (Taipei: China Publishing Company, 1969), p. 246.

at Montana State University, takes this opportunity to do a study on the comparison of education between the two nations. However, due to the broadness of education, the writer limited this study to only a selective comparison of secondary education.

Although the new school system has been adopted for almost fifty years in China, through this study the writer has easily found out that the aims and policies of Chinese schools are influenced strongly by the old ideas of Confusionism. Many new courses have been added in the curriculum of secondary schools, but the instructional method is the same. Much memorization is emphasized by the teachers for the students. Many historical events are given to the students for recitation. Even the English language is taught by recitations and memory.

Through the study about American education, the writer found that the system of American education is more active and flexible. Each state has its own aims and policies for education depending upon the economic, racial, and social backgrounds. This is rather new to the writer. The writer strongly believes that primarily due to these factors, American education has produced many of the greatest scientists, artists, novelists, and other scholars in other professions.

The "education for all" idea gives every American child an opportunity to receive education. One-fourth of the whole population in the United States of America today is enrolled in the public schools.

The American educator's idea that "changes of society affect the school's curriculum" exerts a very strong influence on the present American education. From the school curriculums, the writer may see clearly that many new scientific courses have been added in secondary schools since the end of the Second World War.

Recently, more emphasis on how to know other people better has been given to students in elementary and secondary schools. This is an excellent idea for the future education of the United States. As a leading country of the world, the United States should let American people understand other people as well as their culture better. Understanding between nations and people will help solve international problems in conference rooms.

As an educator in China, the writer would like to take back to his homeland some new ideas from the learning processes in the United States. They are: (1) a new method of teaching for all courses; (2) encouragement of students in Chinese schools to start discussion, not just listen to the teacher; (3) encouragement of teachers to use the "learning by doing" method of teaching and to improve the laboratory facilities in schools; (4) encouragement of teachers to assign more outside reading apart from the textbook; (5) attempt to reduce part of the homework for students; and (6) if circumstances permit, the use of audio-visual aids for students in classrooms while language, history, geography, and cultural courses are being taught.

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHINESE
AND AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The educational system of the Republic of China is quite similar to that of the United States. Education is regarded as the most effective way to educate young people to know what is democracy.¹ However, Chinese education has a much longer history than that of America. The history of Chinese education has an unbroken line of some four thousand years. The present leaders of China have shown that they are at once both proud and critical of their ancient heritage.² According to Chinese history, even in the Chou dynasty (1122-255 B.C.), China had very good systems for education. "Education was widespread, with a national university in the capital and various grades of schools known as SHU, HSIANG, and HSU in the villages. This was, indeed, a period in which scholars, writers, and thinkers were held in the highest esteem, and culture flourished as it had never flourished before."³

¹Sun Pang-cheng, Chung Kuo Chiao Hu Wen T'i, Chinese Educational Problems (Taiwan: Commercial Press Book Company, 1970), p. 539.

²Carlton E. Beck, Editor, Perspectives on World Education (Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1970), p. 142.

³Chen Chih-ping, Chinese History (Taipei: China Publishing Co., 1966), p. 8.

At the present time, the education system has three levels which are: elementary, secondary, and higher education in China (Taiwan). Graduate school, vocational school, special education for deaf-blind students, as well as kindergarten, form part of the education system. Both public and private schools are organized in accordance with the above mentioned unified system. Some missionary schools are also requested to meet this system.

Kindergarten

The first opportunity for Chinese children to receive education is the kindergarten. In Taiwan, there are some 590 kindergartens, mostly located in cities. The age of pupils generally ranges from four to six. The kindergarten works closely with parents in providing useful pre-school education to young children.⁴ The aim of kindergarten education is carefully designed to educate children to know how to be a nice boy or girl through the basic programs, to know how to get along with people, and cultivate them to have good habits.

Elementary Education

Before 1968 Chinese used elementary schools as compulsory education units. However, beginning with the autumn of 1968, the Chinese government extended its compulsory education from six years to nine

⁴Pang-Cheng, op. cit.

years. Due to the successful economic development on Taiwan, the government now has enough educational funds to let every Chinese citizen receive free education for three years longer.

In accordance with the Constitution, all children at age of six have to enter elementary school for six years, plus three more years in Junior Middle school with free education; and for the poor children, the textbooks are provided by the government.⁵

The lower grades in elementary schools comprise the first four years, and the curriculum varies with grades. For lower grades, it consists of Chinese language, math, civics and morals, health and physical education, general arts, social studies, etc. For the fifth and sixth grades, the fused pattern curriculum is adopted and used. The curriculum consists of Chinese language and reading, math, science studies, fine art, music, civics and morals, industrial arts, history and geography, as well as physical education.

Promotion from one grade to the higher is based on a pupil's achievement in all subjects.⁶ This is why all students in China study very hard even in elementary schools. Some of them even do their recitations in trains and buses when they go to school in the early morning.

⁵ Ministry of Education, Educational Statistics of the Republic of China (Taiwan: Ministry of Education, 1968), p. 4.

⁶ Sun Pang-cheng, Chung Kuo Chiao Yu wen T'i, Chinese Educational Problems (Taiwan: Commercial Press Book Company, 1970), p. 540.

The elementary school enrollment has increased sharply in the past twenty years. In 1944, there were 1,097 elementary schools with 707,343 students. In 1968, elementary schools numbered 2,244 and students, 2,383,204. The percentage of school age children actually enrolled in 1944 was 71.31 and in 1968, it increased to 97.67.⁷

Secondary Education

The secondary education comprises high schools, vocational schools, and special schools for retarded (deaf and blind) students. These types of schools are divided into junior and senior levels. From seventh grade through ninth grade is junior middle school (equivalent to American Junior High) and from tenth grade through twelfth grade is senior middle school (equivalent to American Senior High). The school system is commonly referred to as the 6-3-3 plan: six years for elementary school, three years each for the junior and senior middle schools.

The curriculums of the elementary and the secondary education are designed by a Curriculum Committee sponsored by the Ministry of Education.⁸ Usually it is comprised of educators, college professors, experts, teachers, and educational administrators.

In the junior middle schools, a large portion of the curriculum is not flexible. Every student must pass each subject for the promotion from one grade to the higher grade. The curriculum for the senior

⁷Ibid., p. 540.

⁸Ibid., p. 541.

middle school is rather a college preparatory academic program. Not only must one pass each of the subjects, but also get a pretty high score in order to meet the requirements of the college entrance examination, which is unified for the whole island and sponsored by a Unified Committee of College and University Entrance Examinations each summer.

The curriculum for junior middle school consists of Chinese, English, Civics, History, Geography, Math, Physics and Chemistry, Science Studies, Health and Sanitation, Physical Education, Music, Arts, Boy or Girl Scout Training, and Industrial Arts (or Household Affairs for girls).⁹

The curriculum for the senior middle schools consists of Chinese, English, Civics, Three Principles of the People, History, Geography, Math, Physics, Chemistry, Music, Arts, Handicrafts (or Household Affairs for girls), and Military Training (or Nursing for girls).¹⁰

As to the vocational schools, the curriculum consists of Chinese, English, Civics, History, Geography, Math, and Physical Education, which are called the basic courses for vocational students. Except these basic courses, several main courses will be emphasized in each school according to its category. For example, in the agricultural

⁹Wang Ya-chuan, Tan Chi-sheng and Li Chen-yun, Chung Hua Min Kuo Chung Teng Chiao Yu, Secondary Education of the Republic of China (Taipei: Secondary Education Department of Ministry of Education, 1963), pp. 76-77.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 77.

schools, some agricultural course will be given which prepares students for farming operations and management. Home economics schools will add child care, cooking, interior decoration, etc., which will prepare students for home management.

The number of high schools increased rapidly within the past twenty years. In 1944, there were only forty-five high schools with 29,005 students. There were 664 schools with 770,120 students in 1968. It is the same with the vocational schools. In 1944, there were only twenty-seven vocational schools with 14,628 students. In 1969, the number of vocational schools was 134 (Agricultural, Industrial, Commercial, Marine, Home Economics, and Nursing), and the number of students increased to 150,131.¹¹

Higher Education

The institution of higher education consists of four years of undergraduate study leading to a bachelor degree in a college or university in arts, science, or education. Two more years of graduate study are required for a Master's degree, and students have to pass a comprehensive test plus write a thesis. Two or three additional years of graduate work and study, plus passing a foreign language qualification examination, comprehensive test, and writing a doctoral dissertation,

¹¹ Sun Pang-chen, Chung Kuo Chiao Yu Wen T'i, Chinese Educational Problems (Taiwan, Commercial Press Company, 1970), pp. 541-542.

will qualify a student for the Ph.D.

Beside the regular college and universities, there are many kinds of junior colleges in Taiwan that offer two to three years training to high school graduates. Junior colleges usually include technological, agricultural, nursing, normal, engineering, commerce, and home economics.

In 1946, there was only one university and three colleges with 2,983 students. In 1968, the number of institutions of higher learning in the Republic of China increased to eighty-five; the total number of students was 161,337.¹²

Chinese Students in Foreign Countries

At present, there are more than 10,000 Chinese students studying in foreign countries, with the largest number in the United States of America. Each year recently about two thousand college graduates received graduate school scholarships coming to America for advanced study. Most of them were straight "A" students while they were in universities or colleges in Taiwan. On the other hand, foreign students are awarded Chinese government scholarships on an individual merit basis or under bilateral cultural exchange treaties.

In 1967-68, there were 348 foreign students in Taiwan colleges and universities: 101 from Vietnam, 63 from the United States, 61 from Korea, 40 from Japan, 20 from Thailand, 17 from Malaysia, 7

¹²Ibid., p. 453.