

Dear Mr. Bernard

I am a student from China, and I learnt a lot after reading your article <A Brief History of American Higher Education>. Regarding the topic of education in America, I want to share some of my opinions with you.

When I studied in my country, we had long been told that America has the most successful education system. I think it is true that because in most ranking lists of the world-wide best universities, usually two third of them comes from America. And also, America has the most number of winners of Nobel Prize, which can prove the successes of education. However, there are many people keep questioning that the elementary and secondary education of America is not as good as the performance of higher education. I've seen a documentary film recently contends that there are serious problems existing in America's elementary and secondary education. Many students can't improve their study ability in school, especially after they enter into middle school. Student's ability of reading and mathematics are much worse than Indian and Chinese students. Actually, in China, many parents concede that most universities in America are better than any of universities in China, they still hope their children will finish their secondary education in China before go to America for college, in order to have a better foundation mathematics or logic training.

In my opinion, the ideas that encourage student to think independently or critically are very beneficial to students, particularly for those relatively more talented or diligent students. Nevertheless, maybe they are not the most effective ways to teach all of the students from an average perspective because not all students have the ability to study well in a "critical" way. Therefore, for most students, to learn more facts and theories are more practical for them, which is also very necessary for people to make a living in society. In other words, to accept more knowledge is more useful for normal student in their future life. So, my question is, do you agree that the current higher education (or the entire education system) in America is more possible for talented students to stand out? But in some levels, those normal students are more likely to lose the chance to acquire knowledge at the best time.

Thank you very much!

Best,
Boyang Li