

Abstract

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A student's perspective on higher education in China and the potential of liberal arts and science

Within the wider context of the process of internationalization and reform, the potential and future of liberal arts and science programs in China's cultural and political climate has become a specific area of discussion. The objective of this paper is to contribute to this debate by providing a 'student perspective' on the concept of liberal arts and science education and higher education in China. In discussing how students might be best prepared and educated to become global leaders, it is interesting to determine what Chinese students themselves expect from education and how they wish to see the future higher education system. On the basis experience of Chinese students and literature, students' interests and also challenges to Chinese education reform have been identified and discussed. This study discusses findings showing that students attach importance to more flexibility within the curriculum and show profound interest in 21st century skills, but it also mentions the challenges of implementation within the existing academic structures and cultural learning environment. In addition, touching upon the discussion on liberal education as a curriculum or as pedagogy, the question arises whether the Western and Chinese approach on education can be combined within liberal education. Although there may be demand for liberalization of the Chinese higher education system, further developments in China may point out to what extent it will be liberal arts and science education 'with Chinese characteristics'.