

組別: 散文

篇名: What Taiwan Can Learn From American College Education

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What Taiwan Can Learn From American College Education

Taiwan's higher education system is largely modeled after America, however, there are still many ways in which they differ. Having had the chance to experience both systems, I feel that American college education is more suited to promote individual learning.

One of the first differences I noticed was the length and frequency of class time. In Taiwan, we are used to having classes two hours a week. Such a long period of class time can cause fatigue, as it is proven that people's concentration on a certain subject will begin to stray after 20 minutes. Also, because the course is only held once a week, students often forget the knowledge they learned in the previous class in the long period between classes. In America, classes are usually 60-80 minutes, depending on the number of credits it is worth, and take place three to four times a week. This way, students can digest smaller portions of the coursework in one setting, while coming into contact with it more frequently.

In class, the most common method of teaching in Taiwan is lecturing. While this is the most efficient way to convey a large amount of knowledge to a large body of people, students easily get bored and distracted when they are simply sitting and listening to information. Some professors ask students to do group presentations, which does allow students to familiarize themselves with a portion of the coursework and learn to work with others. But in reality, many group presentations are rushed and not very well presented. In the US, due to small class sizes, each individual student will have significantly more chance to participate in class. Professors often hold classes in the form of discussions, where everyone can contribute their opinion. This is a good exercise to promote critical thinking and can keep everyone involved.

After class, most courses in Taiwan do not require a lot of extra work. For most courses, there are a few pieces of homework to be completed and handed in at specific points in the semester. As a result, most of the time, students do not feel the need to review the coursework after class, and knowledge is easily forgotten. American courses require a lot of pre-class preparation, such as reading material or exercises. Without completing this preparation, it would be very difficult to keep up in class. For some classes, there is a longer paper with strict requirements for form and citation. This after class work allows students to work independently on course material and improve their reading and writing skills.

Of course, there are some limitations that prevent the American model from working as smoothly in Taiwan. Due to cultural differences, Taiwanese students are less willing to speak up and participate in class, and may not be as well trained in self-studying. But even so, there are still many positive aspects of American college education that would benefit Taiwanese universities as well, such as reducing length and increasing frequency of class time. No education system can be perfect for every student, but there are certainly some methods that can help make learning easier. Perhaps by making some changes to the way students are taught, more creative independent thinkers will emerge from the Taiwanese education system.

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篇名: Which Way Of Learning Is Better?

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Which Way Of Learning Is Better?

Have you ever had this kind of experience? You make a dish according to the recipe of a famous cook, but it doesn't taste as good as the one that said cook has made. Have you ever thought, on these occasions, why is that even if you follow all the directions perfectly, the dish doesn't come out right? There has always been argument concerning which form we are able to gain more knowledge, from books or from real life experience, and which is more important. I have reached a conclusion that both knowledge from books and knowledge from experience are essential in their own way.

Firstly, there is a big difference concerning the time needed to obtain knowledge. When you learn from experience, you have to repeat the 'trial and error' method again and again, before you learn the right way to do a task. Learning from experience sometimes takes a lot of time, since the learner has to try again and again until he gets it right. In comparison, learning knowledge by reading books takes much less time than learning from experience. You need only memorize the words in the book to input knowledge. This method is very convenient since there is no place for error.

Secondly, there is a gap between the two types of learning when it comes to how the obtained knowledge stays in the brain of the learner. Learning from experience takes a lot of time and effort, but once you get hold of the knowledge, it is hard to forget because you have used a lot of energy in learning it. In comparison, knowledge gained by reading books is forgotten quickly and easily. That is because knowledge learned by reading books mostly stay in our minds in the form of words rather than realistic data such as images, sound, or smell. It is easier for people to forget abstract knowledge such as words, as opposed to real life experiences.

Last but not least, experiences and books are different as to the limit of what people can learn from it. There is only so much we can study by experience. There is so much knowledge that is virtually impossible for most people to learn by personal experience, for example astrophysics. On the other hand, books present knowledge of almost everything in this universe that man has investigated. Thanks to books and essays, we are able to gain knowledge about space even if most of us have never entered a spacecraft.

In my opinion, we get the best results by combining knowledge gained from books and knowledge gained from experience. It would be much easier to upgrade the flavor of a dish by not only tracing the experience of making said dish before, but also reading books about ways to make the dish. There are a lot of circumstances in which both types of knowledge are needed in order to produce the best results. As the old saying goes, the wisest man is the one who has walked furthest and read deepest.

On freedom and security

Freedom and security are two desirable values for which people long. Interestingly, they are interrelated but contradictory. To relish freedom, one must be solitary and give his security up. To enjoy security, one must follow the trend and tie his freedom up. It is a dilemma for modern people. I'm of the opinion that only when we reach a comfortable balance between the dyad can we truly be happy.

It isn't always about making choices. Some said it's not a big deal because they think freedom is the ability to make choices independently and the number of choices we can make is provided by security. Of course they can justify their arguments by narrowing freedom and security down to this level. However, the freedom and security I am elaborating is much more profound than daily basis. Those who failed to find the statement suspicious should be reminded that it isn't always about making choices. Instead, it is about how and why we are allowed to make choices. For example, when writing this passage, I was subject to human languages, but they ensured my communication is effective. By conforming to intangible norms, I gained security but lost freedom.

What truly limits our freedom is an abstract idea that we cannot see and touch. Whenever I try to name the limiter, I am troubled because before actually doing it, I have to use languages to think. This freedom-killer is constructed and sustained by the society, an imagined community in which individuals interact and communicate. Unfortunately, we kept reproducing and strengthening the freedom-killer with our daily routines and seldom did we doubt our ways of living. As it has grown far more taken-for-granted than we can ever imagine, it is nearly impossible for us to have a second thought. In this regard, are we free enough? I don't think so.

The dyad is so ambivalent that sometimes we get frustrated to figure it out. Freedom and security are like wet and dry. When one appears, the other must disappear. It's a struggle for us because we do need both of them to be happy.

Without freedom, security is slavery. Without security, freedom is an illusion. That's the reason why we have to seek a balance between them. It is a war in which our enemies are ourselves. What we have created to sustain the legitimacy of society has gone out of controlled. As a result, for the sake of our long-lost happiness, we have to fight. I am not sure about the odds of winning, but if you do miss your bright, innocent smiles. Join me by stating thinking of freedom and security.

Social Framing: Inevitability and Objectivity

Humans' life is dominated by sensory input. We see, hear, smell, taste, touch and feel all the time. Our five senses are constantly taking in new information; our subconscious--even while we sleep, thus dreaming--is constantly working through these stimuli. Besides, every single social interaction introduces us to new information, ways of thinking, and experiences. These factors determine the way we interpret things. Therefore, to imagine a life without framing is to imagine non-life. However, some begin to suspect that human being are losing autonomy because of getting too much information from the outside world. However, life with framing doesn't necessarily mean losing our self-determination. With social framing, we are less likely to see things purely yet we can still maintain our own sovereignty.

Every one of us is born into a complex social environment. Socialization as a process refers to how individuals internalize or inherit social traditions, rituals, beliefs and norms, as well as learning to function as a member of a given society. It is an inevitable process of life. Therefore, to be completely free of social framing is unimaginable. According to John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, "When the camera reproduces a painting, it destroys the uniqueness of its image." (Berger 149) This concept could be applied to socialization. As learning and growing reproduce a person, it destroys the originality or innocence of the "biological" human. Virtually, all of our perceptions are already colored or framed by external information as we're growing up. Social environment affect us in various ways, helping us to become a member who meets the requirement of the community. Social groupings, such as family, school, church or other day-to-day occasions promote socialization, while mass media help promote socialization. These are factors that contribute to our way of "seeing".

Media is a powerful social organization that introduces us to new information every single day. It plays a significant role, rapidly increasing in recent decades, in socialization because it shapes our perceptions toward many different issues. Take social class, for example. Stratification is framed by our society. Since, people are now bombarded with countless advertisements, we get to know numerous brands through media and easily recognize those particular brands that only wealthy people can afford to buy. In all television shows or dramas I've watched, rich people all seem to have the same image or characteristics. They live in a mansion, use and wear luxury items and are always well respected. Crucially, every image embodies a way of seeing and the images shown become deeply rooted in our minds. When we judge whether people are rich or not, we usually judge by the quantity and quality of material wealth they surround themselves with. These materials become a symbol of identity, status and ability, which are formed by society. It translates to our way of seeing or judging people. It illustrates that our thoughts are created and reproduced through the process of socialization. However, to see things through these social filters does not mean to lose sovereignty as long as we recognize that the filters are there.

Framing is inevitable without doubt, but one way to maintain our autonomy is to think both critically and objectively. When it comes to the example of social class, which is framed by our society, we can come up with questions. Should we only look at their possessions to judge their class? Is it true that people who carry these luxury brands are rich? In fact, there's a popular term called "card slave," which means people who can only pay the minimum balance on their credit card debt, but keep purchasing new goods. As a result, they are forced to work the rest of their lives to pay back the debt. Most of the time, they lavish money on luxury items in order to

“look” rich. However, to look rich does not mean they are truly rich. Therefore, relying simply on this external information might lead us to incorrect assumptions. By being more objective, in questioning our ability to judge, we can take back some of our sovereignty and make adjustments critically for the ever-present phenomenon of social framing. And since social framing is ever-present phenomenon, we should always accept ‘new’ external information in order to think critically and to challenge our own values.

Significantly, although socialization is a process of homogenization that makes it difficult for us to see things purely, yet every individual still owns their autonomy. Humans can be skeptical; to fight against what has already been established. When we can propose a new interpretation of things that we used to take for granted, we are maintaining our own rights. Although every one of us has been through the same process, each of us still has different kinds of values and hold different attitudes toward things. If people really lost their sovereignty completely, then how could each of us be different from others? Social framing is inevitable, and this is the only way to be connected to the outside world. Most importantly, our minds are only tinted by the basic colors of social framing; whether we accept the palette of society or not is still something we can decide for ourselves.

Work Cited

Berger, John. "Ways of Seeing." *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers*. By David Bartholomae and Tony Petrosky. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999. N. pag. Print.