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EDUCATING YOUNG GIANTS

New Book Explains the Differences and Similarities of Chinese and American Schools and What We Can Learn from Them

Americans fear the increasing power of China. Yet today 140,000 Chinese students are studying in the United States. Why? Because they seek an American style education.

In **Educating Young Giants: What Kids Learn (And Don't Learn) in China and America** (Palgrave, 2012), internationally known educator Nancy Pine breaks new ground in understanding the strengths and needs of each school system.

“After 20 years of research in China and teaching everything from kindergarten to graduate school in the United States,” Dr. Pine says, “I have learned one fundamental fact: we both want what the other has. Americans want more studious, focused students who are good at math; the Chinese want innovative students who can create imaginative ideas.”

Using vignettes and comments from parents, students and teachers in each country as well as from her extensive research, *Educating Young Giants* looks at our different styles of teaching, the way teachers are prepared and supported in the classroom, the influence of our histories, and the nature of assessments. Dr. Pine particularly emphasizes the very different teaching styles. “The Chinese teach each lesson as if it is a performance, and students are expected to deliver perfect answers in the classroom. In contrast, American teachers expect students to ask questions and develop their opinions as classes go along, so their lessons allow for improvisation and incomplete ideas within the classroom.”

One education system is not superior to the other; the two systems are different. In China, a 2000-year tradition emphasizes the importance of doing well in school. Confucius's teachings about diligence, hard work, and study are engrained in people's lives and beliefs. Students must excel in high school and college entrance exams and that pressure drives family life. In contrast, Pine points out, many more opportunities exist in American schools to explore different activities and subjects, sometimes to change course, and to take risks. In classes, polished performances are not expected, but participation is. U.S. families tend to think of childhood as being for more than study. School is important, but so are other things.

Louis Carrillo, principal in the Los Angeles school district, writes, “Neither China nor the United States can afford to ignore or put aside the concepts brought forth in Pine's fascinating book about the underpinnings of the educational and cultural systems of both countries.” Once you start reading *Educating Young Giants*, it is hard to put down.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nancy Pine, PhD, is an internationally known educator. She has taught for 14 years in public schools, directed a college Elementary Education Program for 10 years and the Bridging Cultures: U.S./China Program. In China, she has observed and carried out research in urban and rural schools for over 20 years. She blogs for the Huffington Post and presents regularly at educational conferences. Visit her online at <http://nancypine.com>.

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