

导读:人们经常把中国的教育揶揄为应试教育,认为中国学生不具备独立思考的能力,但是新的研究表明直到大学之前,中国培养的学生具备世界上最强大的若干项批判性思维技能。



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The study, to be published next year, found that Chinese freshmen in computer science and engineering programs began college with critical thinking skills about two to three years ahead of their peers in the United States and Russia. Those skills included the ability to identify assumptions, test hypotheses and draw relationships between variables.

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Yet Chinese students showed virtually no improvement in critical thinking after two years of college, even as their American and Russian counterparts made significant strides, according to the study.

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The Chinese government has built hundreds of universities in recent years to meet soaring demand for higher education, which many families consider a pathway into the growing middle class. Enrollment last year reached 26.2 million students, up from 3.4 million in 1998, with much of the increase in three-year polytechnic programs.

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But many universities, mired in bureaucracy and lax academic standards, have struggled. Students say the energetic and demanding teaching they are accustomed to in primary and secondary schools all but disappears when they reach college.

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Others blame a lack of motivation among students. Chinese children spend years preparing for the gaokao, the all-powerful national exam that determines admission to universities in China. For many students, a few points on the test can mean the difference between a good and a bad university, and a life of wealth or poverty.

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When students reach college, the pressure vanishes.

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The Stanford researchers suspect the poor quality of teaching at many Chinese universities is one of the most important factors in the results. Chinese universities tend to reward professors for achievements in research, not their teaching abilities. In addition, almost all students graduate within four years, according to official statistics, reducing the incentive to work hard.

