

A View from China - 2018

Yaozhou Zhang <zhangyaozhou@gmail.com>
To: Iris Rotberg <irotberg@gwu.edu>

Thu, Nov 8, 2018 at 5:03 AM

Dear Prof Rotberg,

It is a great honor to have the chance to learn about your insights on the policies and current issues of US education system. And grateful for your time, especially after your dental treatment, hope you are all well now.

I am impressive of US citizens common sense on their preference on public school, and I think it was a positive feedback for them yesterday when Arizona says no to Proposition 305 in a big margin. That upend my perception about US education before I came here. I take it for granted that US people cherish their liberty and want to pursue their own happiness via school choice. Seems that is not the case. (Maybe I believe it is partly due to the shrinking middle class and the high burden of education cost.) But we should strike the balance, the last thing I want to see is US becomes a nanny state, because there are tyrant regimes all around the world, US as a world leader still has much to do, and I think it is rather the great people of America who will do this. That great shock I have mentioned before I believe is in larger parts due to American people's love of equality, and their companions for the poor people for the disadvantaged, the minorities. As we can see in your policy to give every student regardless of where they come from a leveled playground, even for children of illegal immigrants. That in my view is the greatness of America, which dwarfs China which categorically does not treats our own kids equally.

I am happy to know that you as a prominent education policy researcher are interested in Chinese migrate workers children. I will put you into contact with my fellow, also Mr. Zhang in contact in a later email. He have been supporting migrate workers kids for more than 10 years in Shanghai and other places in China.

Back to the issue of school choice, I personally is for choice, because I don't like the quasi brainwashing environment in Chinese public schools. Many parents at my age send kids to private for this reason but not all, most of them want to have good acedemic results for their kids and eventually go to a good college. We cannot blame their rational behavior in spite of the fact that the choice of more affluent families cause massive stress and pressure on the vast majority of economically disadvantaged group.

The high staggering cost of private school in China has been a huge burden on the family and for some it cause even more stress for the student and parents as well.

That's why I personally believe Charter school model will benefit Chinese parents in the fact that it is free and it have more leeway to avoid the absurdity of the State. A free nation should be made up of free citizens, and I am chilling to know today a disastrous culture revolution period policy 40 years ago is coming back: Chinese high students who fail political scrutiny will be disqualified from going to a college and university. What will happen to my daughter, since I am a big dissent in my community?

Thank you again Prof Rotburg for your follow up email for my question, it answers my question and I will try to learn more about its practice in my upcoming meetings with schools and school boards.

All the bests

Yaozhou Zhang

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Iris Rotberg <irotberg@gwu.edu>
To: Yaozhou Zhang <zhangyaozhou@gmail.com>

Thu, Nov 8, 2018 at 9:45 PM

Dear Mr. Zhang,

Thank you so much for your e-mail and your very eloquent discussion of our countries' education systems. I certainly understand why you might favor charter schools for China and why they might be helpful in giving families more freedom.

It was sad to hear that you fear some aspects of the Cultural Revolution might be returning and I hope very much that will not happen and your daughter will be free to express her beliefs and pursue her education. On our first trip to China, in the 1980s, we met a number of people who had suffered terribly during the Cultural Revolution.

I tried in Tuesday's discussion to go beyond the current negative political rhetoric in this country and show, despite all the remaining problems, what the United States has been able to accomplish in attempting to move to a more equitable society. Hopefully, U.S. institutions—particularly Congress and the courts—will be able to withstand the current administration's policies.

Thank you for introducing me to Yichao Zang. I look forward to being in touch with him.

And, yes, I have completed dental work for the moment, but will be back for more in January!

I look forward to staying in touch. Happy travels,

Iris

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Yaozhou Zhang <zhangyaozhou@gmail.com>
To: Iris Rotberg <irotberg@gwu.edu>

Fri, Nov 9, 2018 at 4:35 PM

Dear Prof Rotberg

Thank you for coming back to me.

We visited a Charter School franchise management NGO named Baltimore Curriculum Project and one of its five Charter Schools-Hempstead Hill Academy.

They don't skim schools from other neighborhood district schools, so they have less criticism from the public, plus they also take kids needs special education and kids from minority ethnic family.

I guess all the negative publications of charter schools in the media are run by for profit organizations. Since media tend to report negative things, will it distort the fact that there are in deed good practice of charter school?

In China although there is not legal framework for charter school, but in practice there are plenty of schools actually run in the style of charter school, and for larger part of it, is not motivated by equality or by addressing problems, such as migrant worker's kids, but for profit. And the lack of scrutiny leads to various forms of corruption, and a toxic education ecosystem.