Compared with other countries, what is missing in contemporary Chinese higher education?

Under the huge pressure of the National College Entrance Examination (NCE), it has become a trend that Chinese parents are more willing to send their children abroad for further study. In this contemporary society, it seems to be a common sense that universities in developed countries are more favorable to students than universities in China. But why do universities abroad become more attractive to us? If we look closely into universities in Western countries, we can clearly see some characteristics of universities abroad which those in China do not possess.

First, Western universities give their students full freedom to develop their interests. We all know that in China, almost all the university applicants should take part in the NCE. Whether they will be admitted or not fully depends on their scores and rankings. And if students were studying what they are not interested in, it is hard for them to switch their majors. Only those who excel others in academic performances could get the chance. However, many universities in other countries often respect students’ own willingness. For example, universities in the USA like Harvard or MIT do not make their students choose their major so quickly. American university applicants also have exams like SAT, but the scores are only for reference. Students in American universities will receive “general education” during their first year in college. Through general education, they can clearly see what they are interested in, which is helpful for them to decide what they want to learn in college years. As a result, students can quickly adapt life in college and perform better in their study.

What’s more, the indexes for evaluating qualities of Western and Chinese universities are quite different as well. In China, professors are mostly evaluated by the quantity of the essays they published, and they usually cannot receive a high salary or proper respect that they deserve, resulting in low teaching quality of some universities. However, in other universities, professors work really hard on improving their teaching qualities. For example, in the USA, there is a strict assessment mechanism for professors. Only those who have real abilities to instruct their students can be tenured professors. They receive high salaries and respect, and are devoted to their work. Also, Chinese universities put high value on the statistics and rankings like employment rate. However, other universities do not care much about them. They think that statistics like employment rate should not be the indexes of evaluating a university’s teaching quality. Instead, they focus more on the personal quality of their students.

In conclusion, Western universities indeed excel those in China in terms of teaching quality and academic performances. It is a good choice for students to fly abroad for further study, but what really matters is that Chinese universities should take proper measures to improve their quality.