

The right to education in 21th century

Zhang Li Nanyang Technological University / Singapore

When talking about the concept of educational right, we usually refer to those basic primary education and secondary education. Governments are always so proud by reporting the number of people attending school or university. Actually, that's much less than enough at this moment. I mean people may feed themselves by farming or shrimping without knowing much knowledge centuries ago. But times have changed, in this new century, the society has been so developed that it requires people to get more educated and more skilled.

As it turns out, the individuals also need to improve themselves to be very knowledgeable and creative to realize their own values in this fast-developing society. For the young generation, most of them can't be satisfied by just some basic university education, which is usually of low quality, or even less. They want to be capable enough to change something, which they should be in a desirable society, like make some real contribution to science or run some successful business. To do so, they need education, good education, advanced education that can equip them with advanced knowledge and strong ability. And this is their right, which should be admitted and protected. So when it comes to the right of education in the 21th century, this is what we should pay attention to, to provide the individuals enough high quality education.

To achieve kind of high quality education is the most important right for the people now days, which I think so, not just for money, but for the fact that good education will be the most powerful to change themselves and change the world. In ancient China, there was such a person named Confucius, who wanted to end wars and maintain the order of the society, what he chose to do was educating people. He might not succeed in short term, but in long term, he

and his followers did influence to the Chinese people and Chinese history for more than 2000 years. Nowadays, if people want to influence the society, good education is a must.

But the current situation is quite depressing. Good postgraduate education is very rare, many universities are of very low quality. Even though, there are still plenty of people unable to attend university, which should not be the case in this century. People are willing to waste money on wars and political issues, they do not want to invest in education.

Relatively, America has done some excellent work on this. There are a number of outstanding universities and educational institutions there which can satisfy the need of some people. However, the opportunities are only accessible to a very small group. There are still lots of people unsatisfied. An ideal society should be able to provide people as much education as they want.

Obviously, we still have a long way to go.