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## Teaching and Learning in Chinese Higher Education



## Characteristics in Chinese (Traditional) Teaching and Learning

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### Introduction

Since the entry of twenty-first century, Chinese higher education has gone through immense and rigorous changes in quite a few aspects, such as speedy and substantial increase in enrollments, educational resources relocation, and an emphasis on internationalization. Many of these higher education reforms are initiated and issued by Chinese government in pursuit of building more world-class universities. Accompanied by these changes, some shifts in teaching and learning have also emerged in Chinese higher education. Even if these shifts are not nationwide phenomena, they may represent a trend that deserves interpretation. This chapter focuses on some major shifts in teaching and learning within Chinese higher education context in the last two decades and discusses the potential reasons and implications.

In a society, education and its many manifestations do not exist in isolation but closely relate to the societal and cultural environments (Ozer 2015). Chinese students are largely brought up in collectivism cultures and Confucian ideals. Hofstede (2001) identified six national cultural dimensions, among which the dimension of collectivism versus individualism is often researched together with the dimension of power distance, particularly in terms of cross-cultural education. In comparison to many Western countries, China is rated rather high in both collectivism and power distance. Chinese students from collectivism cultures are often regarded to obey teachers, engage less in class discussions and activities, and tend to avoid the attention of teachers. Of relevance, Chinese students from cultures characterized by high power distance tend to view it as an inappropriate behavior to question and challenge teachers and instead behave rather respectfully in response to the instructors. In collectivism cultures, it is highly valued to pursue harmonious relationships among group members in a given community. This can also be reflected in student–teacher relationship in that Chinese students usually do as much as they can to maintain good relationships