

Standardization vs. Development : A Focused Analysis of CET in China

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Introduction

Purpose : This critical analysis examines the College English Test (CET) policy in China, exploring the tension between standardization and the development of practical language skills.

Background : CET, established by the Ministry of Education, is a standardized English proficiency test for Chinese university students, designed to promote English teaching and accurately measure students' language skills (Ministry of Education, 2006).

Stakeholders

Government : The government aims to establish a cohesive standard for English proficiency and talent assessment, ensuring a uniform assessment of English skills across China.

Universities : Universities often link CET scores to scholarships and graduation requirements, influencing educational strategies and student outcomes.

Employers : CET scores are used in recruitment processes, raising questions about the validity and relevance of test scores in assessing actual communicative competence.

Educators & Students : There is a concern that the focus on exam preparation overshadows the development of communicative competence, leading to a test-taking culture rather than a learning-oriented one.

Policy Evolution



Regional Differences : The quality of education varies by region, with students from urban areas often performing better on CET than those from rural areas, highlighting disparities in educational resources and opportunities (Jin, Y. 2011).

Policy Gaps

Personalized Learning : CET's one-size-fits-all approach neglects the diverse needs and career paths of individual students, potentially limiting the development of tailored language skills.

Practical Skills vs. Exam Preparation : There is a growing emphasis on exam preparation at the expense of practical language skills, which are essential for real-world communication and success.

Balance of Educational Goals : There is a need to balance the pursuit of high test scores with the broader goals of education, such as critical thinking, creativity, and the ability to apply knowledge in diverse contexts.

Media Influence

Media Analysis : China Daily's coverage on universities dropping CET as a graduation requirement reflects a shift in educational priorities towards practical English use (Zou, 2023).

Public Opinion : Media coverage plays a significant role in shaping public opinion on education policy and the acceptance of reforms, as highlighted by research on media impact (Huang et al. 2012).

Government Policy Documents

College English Course Requirements (CECR) : The CECR emphasizes the development of students' comprehensive language skills, including not just test-taking abilities but also real-world communication skills (Ministry of Education, 2006).

Digital Capability : Aligning with JISC's framework, the focus is on developing information literacies by improving students' capacity to Find, Evaluate, and Manage digital information, which is crucial in today's digital age (JISC, 2019).

Conclusion

Policy Impact : While CET has been successful in standardizing English education, it has also fostered a test-oriented learning culture that may not fully prepare students for real-world challenges.

Future Direction : There is a need for a more holistic approach to university English education that balances standardized testing with the development of practical language skills, critical thinking, and digital literacy.

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