“Student-Centered Teaching with Chinese Characteristics”

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Abstract: Recent student-centered teaching approaches in high schools in Shanxi Province have made dramatic changes to the organization of the classroom space and given over the majority of the classroom time to student talk instead of teacher talk. These approaches to student centered teaching are characterized by a high level of systematization and coordination and are focused heavily on efficiently raising student achievement in the infamously high-stakes college entrance examination. The development and refinement of these new teaching techniques has been accomplished collaboratively by teachers and educational leaders through the mechanism of the teaching research network. When placed in the context of global academic and policy debates about effective and high-quality approaches to teaching and learning, the Shanxi model of student-centered teaching is instructive. In this paper, we describe the reforms that have been implemented in high school classrooms in Shanxi province and analyze them in light of contemporary educational debate regarding the characteristics of high-quality teaching. What emerges from the analysis is a discussion of conflicting educational values and educational purposes that are faced universally around the globe.