Explore the Differences and Influences of Chinese and Western Education Methods

Venessa Wen

Guangdong Experimental High School International Department, Guangzhou, China
venessa_wen@outlook.com

Abstract. This paper will be analyzed deeply, detailly, and fully about a variety of different fundamental concepts on both approaches from both China and the West and different concepts from teaching, learning, courses, assessment systems, etc. From my research it appears that the education model used in China has been derived from a long cultural history of Confucian Collectivist Cultural legacies focusing heavily on the passing down of information knowledge based systematically through subject matter using high stake exams. On the contrary, there is the Western model based on individualism and liberalism. It is also student centered where teaching and cultivating is for the promotion of students' critical thinking skills, creative skills, practical skills and individuality. But none of them is completely perfect, as each of these models has problems like no innovative thought or unstable foundation. Globalization context is the trend of mutual learning and integration between Chinese education and Western education. This article thinks that in the future, education development cannot choose between two models. A better way to develop education would just be mixing the two types of models together to see which aspect works best in them. This new type of education offers much knowledge with an understanding and comes up with new and fresh ideas. Research gives us the theoretical idea behind the dependence of culture on the model's educator It can also give some ideas and references for work on educational reforms.

Keywords: Chinese and Western education, Educational Differences, Educational Concepts, Teaching Methods, Evaluation Systems.

1. Introduction

Education is the most fundamental thing for humans to pass on culture and display wisdom and make a better future for the future. We should first understand the difference between the two, and academically, we should be able to compare these two models of education. Secondly, we should also understand the differences from the perspective of practical education in China. China is experiencing a great change in its education [1].

China has a long history and tradition of education, and it is strongly influenced by the traditional education model of "Respecting Teachers and Upholding Principles", "Achieving Excellence, Learn to Enter Public Service". The emphasis is on imparting systematic knowledge and following rigorous discipline, as well as taking responsibility for the state and parents [2]. This kind of

education mode still has a strong impact on the education of China at this stage. the teaching plan is pretty much the same, the teacher teaches. The basis for evaluation is the college entrance exam. This model is good at making concrete students' basic knowledge and hardworking, but because it puts too much emphasis on standardized examinations and pays little attention to students' own inherent characteristics and innovation, it often triggers many people's reflections [3,4].

On the contrary is Western education, which evolved from the speculating tradition of ancient Greece and the humanist spirit of the Renaissance [4]. Under the baptism of Enlightenment, it has become an individual-oriented education and free-thinking model. It's student-oriented, they can ask questions, have discussions, work together and the assessment is also a lot more versatile, it's for people who think for themselves and solve hard problems [5]. This kind is quite good at promoting creative thinking and sustaining interest while studying, but relying solely on training in basic knowledge and the strength of a student's will result in issues with the quality of teaching and learning [6].

At present, the speed at which globalization proceeds are becoming increasingly quick, and the race for top talent is intensifying [1]. All the countries around the world are thinking about and changing their education strategy. The Chinese and Western Education has cease being the two separate entities and they're colliding, learning from each other, and fusing all the time. If I could compare the differences between Chinese and Western education systems, and evaluate each side's strengths and weaknesses, and how they should be blended together, then maybe that would be better for creating a more scientific school system that can deal with problems even better for the future society. This article starts from education philosophy, which is the four basic aspects. Teaching method, Course, Education. Assessment system. By integrating these research findings and conducting a comprehensive comparative analysis of Chinese and Western education, we aim to provide some useful insights for the reform and development of our country's education.

2. China's education model

Chinese education model is a cultural line lasting for thousands of years. Its foundation is on Chinese culture, which is basically Confucian traditional culture with very distinct features of being credible, systematic and authoritative. In the flood of modernization and globalization, it preserves its essential traits of traditions, yet keeps on adapting and reforming.

2.1. China's educational philosophy

The Chinese education concept takes collectivism as the core, emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between the individual and the collective - the realization of individual value depends on collective development, and the primary goal of education is to cultivate "all-round development talents" who can integrate into and serve the society. Through classroom teaching, group activities and other links, guide students to establish a sense of social responsibility and collective honor, so that students can experience the "significance of individual contribution to the collective".

At the same time, Chinese education firmly believes that "foundation is the premise of innovation" and places the teaching of basic knowledge and basic skills at the core. Whether it is literacy and arithmetic in primary school, or mathematical formulas and general knowledge of literature and history in middle school, educators generally believe that only by mastering a solid foundation can they provide support for subsequent knowledge application and innovative exploration, and teaching activities always revolve around the "integrity of the knowledge system" [7].

2.2. China's educational methods

In Chinese education, the main form is "teacher-led classroom lectures". Teachers act as the "systematic transmitters of knowledge", using clear logical explanations and demonstration of typical examples to orderly convey subject knowledge to students. This model is highly efficient and can cover all the core contents required by the teaching syllabus within a limited number of class hours. It is particularly suitable for the introductory teaching of basic subjects and avoids knowledge gaps caused by students' deviation in their own exploration directions [7].

Classroom discipline is an important support for ensuring teaching efficiency: Teachers will clearly set "raise hands to speak" and "complete homework on time" as classroom rules, and through constraints, cultivate students' concentration and order awareness. In addition, "practice and feedback" is a key link for consolidating knowledge - through after-class assignments, unit tests, and mock exams, students can strengthen their knowledge memory and application ability through repeated training, and teachers can also grasp students' knowledge weaknesses through the results and promptly adjust the teaching focus [8].

2.3. China's curriculum provision

The Chinese curriculum system is uniformly formulated by the national education department regarding teaching outlines and course standards, featuring high levels of standardization and uniformity. Its core objective is to ensure that all students across the country acquire "balanced and comprehensive" basic knowledge coverage [3]. The curriculum content is mainly based on subject knowledge, covering basic subjects such as Chinese, Mathematics, English, Physics, etc. The arrangement of content for each subject strictly follows the principle of "from simple to complex, logical progression", forming a complete knowledge chain, and avoiding the emergence of knowledge gaps in students' knowledge systems.

Although the curriculum system includes courses such as physical education, music, and art that focus on students' comprehensive qualities, due to the influence of the concepts of "admission-oriented" and "core subjects priority", the proportion of class hours and the degree of emphasis for these courses are generally lower than those of core subjects. Some schools even adjust the class hours for core subjects close to the exam time. Moreover, the flexibility of curriculum setting is insufficient. Schools and teachers have limited room for adjusting the content, making it difficult to adapt to students' interest differences or regional cultural characteristics [3].

2.4. China's assessment system

In Chinese education evaluation, "exam scores" are the core criterion. Scores not only serve as the main basis for measuring students' learning outcomes, but also are the key indicators for evaluating teachers' teaching effectiveness and the quality of schools [8]. From the mid-term/annual exams in primary school to the college entrance examinations and the national college entrance examinations in middle school, exams run through the entire process of students' education. Among them, the national college entrance examination, as a "selective examination", directly determines the path of further education and future development, forming a logic of "determining teaching by exams and evaluating learning by scores", causing teaching and learning behaviors to revolve around "improving scores".

The evaluation content mainly focuses on students' "comprehension of subject knowledge", such as reading comprehension in Chinese and problem-solving skills in mathematics, with an emphasis

on “accuracy and proficiency of knowledge”. However, there are no specific standards or implementation paths for evaluating comprehensive qualities such as innovation ability, practical ability, and teamwork ability. As a result, the evaluation results are difficult to fully reflect students’ true abilities and individual characteristics [2].

3. The Western educational model

The Western educational model is diverse, but it generally emphasizes individualism, autonomy and critical thinking, which stems from the cultural tradition of freedom and democracy.

3.1. The Western educational philosophy

Western educational concepts are oriented towards individualism and regard “respecting individuality and releasing potential” as the core goal. They believe that the essence of education is not “forming standardized talents”, but “helping each student become a unique self” - teachers need to pay attention to students' interests, thinking and emotional needs, and through personalized guidance, enable students to discover their own strengths and realize their own value [4].

“Independent thinking” and “critical thinking” are among the core goals of Western education. In the classroom, teachers encourage students to question the viewpoints in the textbooks and challenge the conclusions of the teachers, believing that “posing questions is more important than solving problems”; the value of education lies not only in imparting knowledge, but also in cultivating the ability to make independent decisions and adapt to society, such as guiding students to plan their study plans, participating in the management of clubs, and enabling students to learn to make choices and take responsibility through practice [1].

3.2. The Western educational methods

In Western education, the “student-centered” inquiry-based learning and interactive teaching methods are widely adopted. The role of teachers has shifted from “knowledge transmitters” to “guiders and inspirers” [9]. In the classroom, teachers seldom give long, one-way lectures. Instead, they stimulate students' active participation by designing question chains, organizing group discussions, and assigning practical projects.

For instance, in history classes, teachers provide multiple pieces of historical materials from different perspectives, guiding students to independently draw conclusions through reading, analysis, and debate; in science classes, students understand scientific principles by designing experiments, recording data, and analyzing results. This “learning by doing” model can not only enhance learning interest but also cultivate independent thinking and the ability to solve practical problems [9]. At the same time, the classroom atmosphere is relaxed and active, allowing students to freely express their viewpoints. The teacher uses guiding questions to organize the train of thought, reducing students’ concerns about expression and providing a fertile ground for the emergence of innovative thinking [10].

3.3. The Western curriculum provision

The curriculum design in the West is highly flexible and diverse. Schools and teachers can, within the framework of the basic curriculum, independently design and adjust the course content according to students’ needs and the characteristics of the school [6]. The curriculum system is divided into “basic courses” and “elective courses”: Basic courses (such as Mathematics, Language,

and Science) ensure that students master core knowledge; elective courses cover fields such as art, sports, and technology, allowing students to choose freely based on their interests and future plans.

Some schools also design interdisciplinary courses, such as "Environmental Science and Art", allowing students to express their thoughts on environmental issues through artistic forms and breaking down the barriers between different disciplines. Moreover, the curriculum focuses on "practicality", for instance, English courses offer modules like "Business English" and "Media English", and science courses incorporate social hot topics such as artificial intelligence ethics to help students connect knowledge with reality [5].

3.4. The Western assessment system

Western educational evaluation adopts diversified methods, breaking through the limitation of "using only test scores as the sole criterion", and paying more attention to the comprehensive evaluation of students' "learning process" and "overall quality" [1]. The evaluation content covers dimensions such as knowledge acquisition (through written tests and homework assessment), classroom performance (the enthusiasm of speaking, the contribution to discussions), innovation ability (the uniqueness of project plans), practical ability (the standardization of experiments, the depth of social practice), and teamwork ability (the contribution of group roles).

The evaluation subjects and forms are also more diverse: the subjects include teachers, self-evaluation by students, mutual evaluation among classmates, and for some courses, parents or external experts are also involved. Besides written tests, the forms also include thesis writing, project presentation, oral defense, and practical reports. For example, the grades of the university marketing course are composed of "classroom participation (20%) + group presentation (30%) + final thesis (30%) + mutual evaluation by classmates (20%)", which can comprehensively reflect students' comprehensive abilities [2]. Moreover, the core purpose of Western educational evaluation is "to promote student development", and teachers will provide personalized feedback based on the results to help students clarify the direction for improvement [1].

4. Contrastive analysis

4.1. Comparison of educational concepts

The educational philosophy in China is centered on "collectivism", emphasizing the harmonious unity of the individual and the collective. The goal is to "cultivate talents who are adapted to and serve society", and it places great emphasis on social responsibility and a sense of collective belonging. In contrast, the educational philosophy in the West is centered on "individualism", respecting the independence and differences of individuals. The goal is to "promote the individualized development of students", and it focuses on exploring individual potential and self-worth [2].

This disparity leads to different orientations in talent cultivation: In China, there is a tendency towards "standardized training", ensuring that students acquire the basic skills necessary for integrating into the social division of labor through unified goals, and career planning guides with reference to industry demands; in the West, there is a preference for "individualized training", encouraging students to choose their development directions based on their interests, and even niche or innovative careers will receive support [4].

4.2. Comparison of teaching methods

The teaching method in China is centered around “teacher-led”, with the classroom mainly focusing on knowledge imparting. The advantage is that it efficiently and systematically conveys knowledge, helping students quickly build a solid foundation and is suitable for the introduction of basic disciplines. However, students are in a “passive acceptance” position, with limited space for independent thinking, which may suppress innovative thinking and lead to the habit of “relying on standard answers” [7].

The teaching method is “student-centered”, stimulating initiative through inquiry, interaction and practice. It can cultivate the ability of independent thinking, critical thinking and problem-solving in practice, and is conducive to the emergence of innovative consciousness. However, the “systematicity” of knowledge transmission is relatively weak. Some students may have knowledge gaps due to deviations in the exploration direction. If the relaxed atmosphere is not properly guided, it may also affect the teaching efficiency [9].

4.3. Comparison of course setting

The core feature of the curriculum in China is “uniformity and standardization”. The state formulates a unified outline to ensure that students have a balanced and comprehensive foundation of knowledge, avoiding knowledge gaps caused by regional or school differences. However, it lacks flexibility and is difficult to meet the individualized needs of students with different interests and specialties. For example, students who are good at art may lack development time due to the high proportion of core subject class hours [3].

The core feature of Western curriculum design is “flexibility and diversity”. Through the provision of a wide range of elective courses and cross-disciplinary design to meet individualized needs, it helps students develop interests and cultivate specialties, and emphasizes practicality and interdisciplinary integration. However, the “systematisms” of basic knowledge may be insufficient. Some students, due to their focus on interest courses, neglect basic disciplines, resulting in fragmented knowledge systems [6].

4.4. Comparison of evaluation systems

The core of China's evaluation system is “exam scores”. Its advantages lie in the uniformity of standards and the simplicity of operation, which enables quick assessment of the basic knowledge mastery of a large number of students and is suitable for selection-based evaluations such as the junior high school entrance examination and the college entrance examination. However, the evaluation dimension is single, it neglects comprehensive qualities, and the results are overly associated with academic advancement, which is prone to causing students to fall into the “single focus on scores” mentality [8].

The core of the Western evaluation system is “multifaceted integration”. Through multi-dimensional, multi-party, and multi-form evaluations, it reflects the learning process and comprehensive abilities, which conforms to the concept of “individualized development” and aims to “promote progress”, thereby reducing the pressure of exam-oriented assessment. However, the evaluation standards are “subjective” and relatively strong. For instance, a teacher's assessment of “project innovation” may be influenced by personal preferences, and its implementation requires teachers to invest more time and effort [1].

5. Discussion

The above comparative analysis clearly demonstrates that the educational models of China and the West are two completely different systems. Each of them has grown and thrived in specific historical, cultural and social environments, and has effectively served the talent demands of their respective societies.

In fact, these two models precisely constitute the two sides of education, with vast complementary potential. The advantages of Chinese education lie in its solid knowledge-based training system, students' high discipline and diligence, as well as the function of achieving social mobility through fair examinations [7]. These aspects are precisely what Western education is concerned about and attempts to strengthen in certain respects, such as the recent borrowing of China's "inquiry-based learning" model in mathematics education reforms in Western countries. Conversely, the advantages of Western education lie in its successful stimulation of students' critical thinking, creativity, practical abilities and lifelong learning interest [2]. This is precisely the shortcoming that Chinese education needs to urgently address in its reform and the cultivation of innovative talents.

It is encouraging that, driven by globalization, the mutual learning and integration of educational models between China and the West have become an irreversible trend of the times. China's educational reform is actively introducing advanced elements of Western education: the new curriculum reform emphasizes "core competencies", advocates inquiry-based learning and project-based learning; in some regions and in the college entrance examination and high school entrance examination reforms, attempts are being made to implement "comprehensive quality assessment", breaking the "only based on scores" mentality [1]. Similarly, the Western education community is also reflecting on the drawbacks of its overly laissez-faire approach, beginning to emphasize the importance of "core knowledge", and studying how to enhance basic academic ability through more structured courses and teaching, especially in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields.

In the future, the development of education must take a "merge Chinese and western" form an excellent education system must have the rigorous, systematic, and profound aspect of the education in both the east and west. It needs to be flexible and innovative, it's western critical thinking. Like the education in China, they will form for them at ones a solid and certain foundation to know, like those of the West, it will implant into that building the wings of imagination set free [3]. To achieve the same goal, policymakers, researchers, and front-line educators need to have a global mindset and historical patience. Based on a full understanding of the cultural origin and inner logic of these two models, we should make creative changes and integrations instead of blindly copying from others. Last but not least, the improvement and selection of educational models, it should be combined with national character and historical-social stages as well as objective conditions, to find out an appropriate path of modern education for its own national conditions and characteristics.

6. Conclusion

The study carried on a comparison and analysis on the education models between China and the West from four sides, respectively, which include concept, method, curriculum, and assessment. And it shows that the differences are the final reflection of the collectivist/individualist culture in the field of education. Chinese education focuses on being the same, teaching people, selecting through exams, and the advantage is in the solid foundation, being strict; Western education focuses on

liberation, cultivating abilities, various assessments, and the advantage is encouraging innovation, valuing practice.

In this 21st world century it will never be that there is an education approach that can solve all future problems on its own. Talent competition has moved from a competition of models towards a competition of integrated ability and innovation. So, the trend of Chinese and western education exchange, mutual improvement will definitely be deeper Chinese education needs to draw more nutrition from Western education nurturing creativity and individuality on the basis of inheriting their own fine traditions; Western education also needs to learn from Eastern wisdom to promote systematic education and grow resilience.

Ultimately, the purpose of education is the same – to cultivate individuals who can adapt to the environment, adjust themselves, and influence others. In the future, people will no longer debate which is better between Eastern and Western approaches; instead, they will discuss how to integrate Eastern and Western sciences in a scientific manner, and what kind of education can encompass everything and provide education that belongs to the future of humanity. This requires all educators around the world to abandon cultural biases, learn from each other with an open mind, and jointly plan the future path of education. To cultivate innovative talents who can adapt to the complex problems of the 21st century and contribute to the sustainable development of human society, such cross-cultural dialogues and integration must be achieved.

References

[1] Li, F. X., & Wang, Y. B. (2023). Educational exchange and mutual learning: A perspective based on Sino - Western differences. Western China Quality Education, 9(14), 38 - 41.

[2] Gu, T. Z., & Gu, X, H. (2018). On the Chinese Model of Education - Based on the Comparison of Chinese and Western Educational Models. Comparative Studies in Cultural Innovation, 2(24), 103-104.

[3] Xia, Y. C. (2020). Analysis of the Differences between Chinese and Western English Education. Industrial and Technological Forum, 19(11), 195-196.

[4] Ma, X. L. (2020). Analysis of the Differences in Pursuing Humanism in Chinese and Western Education. Digital World, (03), 227-228.

[5] Duan, W. (2020). Research on Eliminating Cultural Differences between China and the West in English Teaching. Campus English, (05), 4-5.

[6] Duan, Z. Y. (2020). A Brief Analysis of the Differences between Chinese and Western Education and Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. Campus English, (04), 10.

[7] Guo, X. L. (2019). Thoughts Triggered by the Differences in Chinese and Western Educational Cultures. Examination Weekly, (71), 190-191.

[8] Han, Y. F. (2019). A Brief Discussion on How to Correctly Deal with the Educational Cultural Differences between China and the West. Examination Weekly, (35), 10.

[9] Rong, Q. (2021). A Brief Discussion on the Teaching of Cultural Differences between China and Foreign Countries in the Primary School English Teaching Environment. New Curriculum, (46), 96.

[10] Hu, R., & Xu, Y. J. (2020). Differences and Enlightenments between Chinese and Western Ideological and Political Education in Responding to Emergencies. Journal of Jilin Radio and TV University, (11), 129 - 131.