

Research on the role differences and derivative issues of Chinese and Western students as learners and social participants: A review based on theoretical literature

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Abstract. Against the backdrop of the convergence and localization of global education policies, how to balance instrumental rationality and humanistic care in Chinese education policies has become a hot topic. Based on existing academic research and papers in the academic community, this article will use a literature review method for analysis. Research has found that China's current education policy has a "compensatory effect" (hidden competition generated under the "double reduction" model), and its shortcomings mainly stem from class mobility anxiety in the cultural context, which has caused a series of social problems; The blind transplantation of Western experience may exacerbate local conflicts. Therefore, the study proposes a "culture policy student" triangle adaptation model, advocating the construction of a policy optimization path based on the characteristics of Chinese society. This article provides a theoretical framework for the localization criticism and cross-border comparison of education policies, and provides empirical references for policy makers

1 Introduction

1.1 Research background

Since the 21st century, the wave of globalization has driven the cross-border flow of educational policy concepts, and countries are focusing on exploring paths for educational reform. As a latecomer in education, China needs to face its own shortcomings in the process of transitioning from "exam oriented education" to "quality education". China's current education policy still has a problem of solidification, focusing on imparting pure theoretical knowledge to students rather than teaching them how to face and solve practical problems. This issue has become a social problem that parents and schools are particularly concerned about [1].

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1.2 Academic development

It is crucial to comprehensively grasp the theoretical foundation and development trends of Chinese education, and review the academic development trajectory. At the beginning of the founding of the People's Republic of China (1949-1966), efforts were made to learn from the Soviet model, introduce the theory of Kailov education, and initially construct a basic education framework guided by Marxism. Later, exploration of Chinese characteristic education theory began. In the study of educational history, there has been a deeper exploration of traditional educational ideas in ancient China such as Confucianism and Mohism, and significant achievements have been made in the discipline system of education. However, there are also gaps such as insufficient emphasis on educational psychology, rigid curriculum design, and rigid teacher-student roles. From the implementation of the "double reduction" policy in 2021 to the introduction of the "double rest" policy for middle schools in 2025, it can be seen that there is still a gap in Chinese education and research on social emotional learning needs to be explored. The education systems in both the East and the West are not perfect, and China needs to selectively learn from them.

1.3 Hengshui mode

For example, the Hengshui model is well-known for its strict and standardized time management as well as high-intensity competition mechanisms. This collective high achievement motivation coexists with individual depression tendencies, and students' self-regulation and punishment are very strict, showing obvious behavioral differentiation [2].

1.4 Research topic

The exploration of how China can cultivate more comprehensive students and how to scientifically learn Western education policies is of great significance for the implementation of scientific education policies. The research topic of this article is the study of the role differences and derivative issues of Chinese and Western students as learners and social participants from the perspective of educational policies. This study will use a literature review method to analyze how Chinese and Western policies shape students' psychology and behavior through cultural context as the core issue. At present, research has mostly focused on the effectiveness of a single policy, lacking a cross-cultural comparative perspective, and ignoring the micro evidence of students as policy subjects. Therefore, this study selects three clear and controversial policies from both the East and the West, and through literature criticism and case analysis, aims to break through the binary opposition of the "superiority and inferiority theory" between the East and the West, reveal the cultural modulation mechanism of policy effects, and provide theoretical support for the exploration of China's education policy path.

2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

There are significant differences in educational policies between the East and the West, which reflect huge differences in educational concepts and cultural contexts. The education model in China has been criticized for its characteristics of education, but at the same time, it has the advantages of relative fairness and strong operability. Unlike Chinese education, Western education methods are more flexible and open. According to scholars' research on Chinese and Western education policies, China should provide students with more opportunities for

in-depth thinking and rich scientifically related activities, and increase research on students' psychology and the cultural context behind it.

2.1 Dual dimensions of educational policy effectiveness

At present, Chinese students generally have certain psychological problems, such as being educated from birth with the goal of "not losing at the starting line" [3]. More than half of the students in school suffer from depression, anxiety, and other problems. As they grow up, "academic exams" and "college entrance exams" have become the main theme of students' lives, linking good schools with "success and fame". Utilitarianism is thus born, indicating that the essence of utilitarian education is still a spiritual issue [4]. Education is not only for students, but also for families and schools. In traditional Chinese families, members tend to have feelings of coercion, obscurity, and restraint. With the addition of utilitarianism and other vulgar ideas, the coercive and punitive colors of family education have become even stronger [5]. In summary, under China's education policies, the status of students is not satisfactory, and students also exhibit obvious utilitarianism in employment, resulting in numerous social problems such as structural imbalance, vicious competition in educational qualifications, and deviation in values. In the West, education is often presented as a bottom-up process, influenced by the traditional Western culture of freedom, equality, democracy, and universal love, as well as the spirit of humanism. Western education emphasizes "individualism" [6], fully respects human personality and freedom, emphasizes the promotion of individuality and the realization of self-worth, and the construction of educational activities is more targeted and flexible [7]. The formation of an open and free academic atmosphere under this educational model can greatly stimulate people's creativity and cultivate elite talents who promote social progress. However, to some extent, this "individualistic" culture is also the fundamental cause of the rampant individualism, elitism, and racial issues in Western society.

2.2 The division of educational policy research between the East and the West

The instrumental orientation of China's education policy is rooted in the dual historical logic of the imperial examination tradition and the national modernization strategy: the imperial examination system shaped the collective memory of the "examination dominated class mobility", while policies such as the "Double First Class" construction after the reform and opening up continued the tool positioning of education in serving the development of national human resources. Its instrumental focus is reflected in the triple practice: firstly, the training system centered on the efficiency of further education, such as Hengshui Middle School compressing student behavior into a "college entrance examination machine" through militarized management; Secondly, there is a policy bias towards resource allocation, such as the intensified selection of internal exam papers in key schools, and the alienation of vocational education's "Five Diversion" into institutional exclusion of vulnerable groups; The third is the evaluation control dominated by quantitative indicators, such as directly linking teacher performance pay to student scores [8]. This instrumental logic leads to psychological fragmentation among students, resulting in a coexistence of public obedience to discipline and private depression, as well as inhibition of innovation ability [9]. Taking "double reduction" as an example, the main content of this policy is to strictly control the amount of homework and crack down on off-campus training institutions. On the positive side, this can lead to a decrease in students' anxiety index, but on the negative side, the hidden competition behind the "double reduction" policy has also shifted towards "family private teaching", shifting from

the original "low-cost question sea tactic" to "quality-oriented cultural evaluation performance" [10]. This policy overly relies on mandatory tools such as bans and assessments, neglecting the subjectivity of students and the humanistic value of education. Therefore, China urgently needs to inject humanistic warmth into instrumental rationality.

In Western education, Dutch education has its own unique characteristics. It takes the principle of "educational freedom" guaranteed by the Constitution as its core and constructs an institutional paradigm for the development of students' subjectivity: standardized exams are abolished in primary school, and "gamified learning logs" are used to track individual growth; Middle schools are implementing "personalized learning contracts", for example, a middle school in Rotterdam is implementing dynamic goal setting through teacher-student negotiation; Vocational education is embedded with the course of "Happiness Practice". In terms of policy effectiveness, among OECD and partner countries with available data, the Netherlands is one of the countries with the lowest mathematics anxiety index (-0.22 PISA index, ranked 75/76, 2022) and ranks among the top in the world in terms of autonomous decision-making ability [11]. This model relies on the inclusive consensus of a high welfare society on multiple values. Its technical tools such as "de standardized assessment" and "consultative learning" can provide reference for other countries, but it needs to be alert to the risk of simple transplantation that is divorced from social conditions.

3 Comparative analysis and critical discussion

3.1 Paradox between policy objectives and results

Under China's "double reduction" policy, there has been a "policy compensation effect" led by instrumental rationality. The original intention of the policy goal was to alleviate students' anxiety by reducing homework and strictly limiting extracurricular activities. However, the instrumental implementation logic has led to the alienation of the results. For example, local governments use "zero training institutions" as the assessment indicator, and parents are afraid of "educational stratification" and turn to "underground private education", forming a compensation cycle of "policy pressure → hidden economic competition". The Hengshui model pursues a higher admission rate through extreme theoretical training and moral coercion. Although the admission rate has been increasing year by year in recent years, with the growing demand for thinking and innovation in society, the originally very applicable "question sea tactics" have gradually become ineffective and increasingly unsuitable for the contemporary, new question-oriented education. In addition, the separation of "passion venting" in public and private spaces has also strengthened students' tendency towards depression.

The Dutch phenomenological teaching reform replaces subject-based courses with "interdisciplinary thematic learning", with the policy goal of promoting the coordinated development of students' creativity and happiness. Its effectiveness is reflected in the fact that while PISA scores remain among the top, the academic stress index of 15-year-old students is only 1/4 of the OECD average [12], and the proportion of students who independently design projects has increased from 12% before the reform to 68% in 2022. This balance stems from the deep adaptation between policy design and social structure: teachers have a high degree of professional autonomy to ensure classroom innovation, and the core of this policy is mainly interdisciplinary thematic learning and the cancellation of standardized exams. This flexible educational approach has brought significant positive psychological effects, and students have a high level of innovation consciousness. For example, pharmacy science students at Utrecht

University in the Netherlands have begun exploring machine learning (ML) (a subset of artificial intelligence AI), which can generate new hypotheses about the selection of clinical trial candidate drugs and predict adverse side effects [13]. The high welfare system has alleviated families' anxiety about "education diversion" and enabled the policy's humanistic care goals to be implemented.

3.2 Critique of cultural adaptability

China's policy of prioritizing instrumental rationality in response to social mobility anxiety has resulted in a reversal of goals and means, strictly implementing burden reduction measures in accordance with administrative indicators; On the contrary, the Netherlands reconstructs the education ecosystem with the guidance of "value rationality" and releases student subjectivity by adopting a system of trust that cancels standardized exams. In terms of cultural modulation effects, Hengshui's "militarization of time" is in line with the collective narrative of "the college entrance examination changes destiny", while the Netherlands' "phenomenal learning" relies on the social consensus of "education is life". Both are deeply rooted in local cultural genes, and blindly transplanting them will inevitably lead to soil erosion.

4 Policy optimization suggestions

Based on the comparative analysis of Sino Dutch cases and the criticism of cultural adaptability, this chapter proposes a "gradient synergy" optimization framework and constructs a "culture policy student" triangle adaptation model (see Figure 1), which balances policy tool efficiency and humanistic value care, and constructs the "third path" of China's education policy. Firstly, drawing on the philosophical wisdom of "moderation of tension and relaxation" in traditional culture, guiding students to view competition rationally through classic recitation, cultural lectures, and other methods. Promote the cultural propaganda of "diverse success concept" through media, public advertising and other channels, emphasizing career equality and lifelong learning. Reshaping the forms of family education and school education, and strengthening the education of "fault tolerance culture". Secondly, the phased rationality of the college entrance examination system as a core channel for social mobility should be recognized, but the single function of "one exam determines lifelong" should be gradually weakened, and the weight of comprehensive quality evaluation should be increased; Critically transforming Western technological tools, such as adding "interdisciplinary situational questions" to high school entrance examination subjects, such as Singapore's A-Level reform, while retaining standardization advantages and stimulating innovative thinking [14]. Finally, at the student level, special attention should be paid to psychological issues and a dual-track evaluation system of "mental health academic performance" should be established. Schools are required to regularly release "Student Development Quality Reports" and include them in local government education assessments. A policy compensation warning system should be established to monitor public opinion and dynamically identify the risk of "double reduction 2.0" variation, in order to avoid students' psychological pressure changing forms and growing secretly.

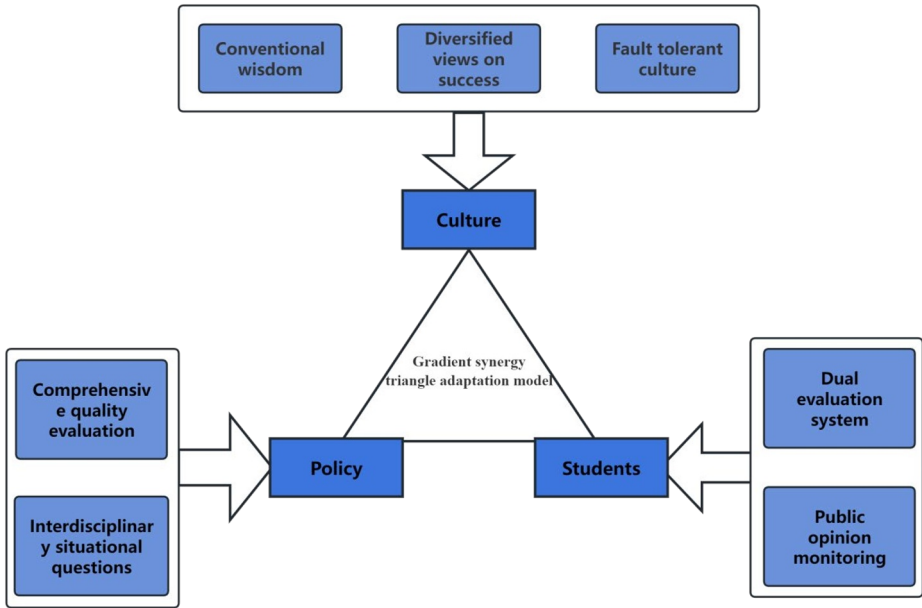


Figure 1. Gradient synergy triangle adaptation model

This proposed system can not only avoid the risk of transplanting Western models, but also gradually break through the constraints of instrumental policies, providing a feasible framework for exploring the "no man's land" of China's education reform.

5 Conclusion

Through research, this paper finds that the development plan of China's education can be interpreted from the perspective of cultural adaptation. The triangular adaptation model of "culture policy student" is conducive to a multi-dimensional interpretation of education and provides an operational plan for China's education policy. The current research still lacks comprehensive literature and sufficient perspectives, and future educational research should continue to focus on analyzing students' psychology and various educational structures. In the past few decades, China has made tremendous achievements in education, but there is still room for improvement. Given the significant differences in national conditions and culture between China and the West, China needs to focus on its own country, base itself on its national conditions, inherit its traditions, absorb foreign influences, and write a more brilliant future for education.

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