

Differences Between Chinese and Western Educational Models Based on the High-Low Context Culture Theory

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Abstract. With the continuous development of globalization and the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, countries are increasingly engaged in cultural exchanges and mutual learning in many fields for common development. In this process, education has always been a focus. Young people are the future and hope of the country, and the education of youth attaches great importance to the development of the country, so China has been learning from foreign education systems in recent years to explore domestic education reform. Chinese and Western education models have their own advantages and disadvantages, and students in different education models show different characteristics. However, to trace the reasons for the differences between Chinese and western education systems, we should go back to different national cultures. Based on Hall's theory of high-low context culture, this paper examines the differences in educational models between China and the West, discusses the influence of context culture on differences, and sheds light on how cultural factors shape educational practices.

Keywords: Educational models, high context culture, low context culture, differences, Chinese and Western.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

The concept of "context" was first proposed by German linguist Wegener in 1885. Context includes three aspects: the first is the objective situation during a conversation, the second is the various components or factors that the listeners can directly associate with, and the third is the degree of awareness of the communication parties to their respective identities. Then, in 1976, the American cultural anthropologist Edward T. Hall published *Beyond Culture*. In this book, Hall proposed that culture is contextual, and the context can be divided into high context and low context. According to Hall's theory, the American scholar William Gudykunst ranked 12 countries with different cultures from "low context" to "high context", and believed that most English-speaking countries have low-context culture, while the cultures of East Asian countries, such as Japan and China, have high-context culture.

Context exists in social life. People with different cultural backgrounds have different ways of thinking and habits of behavior, such as different ways of communication, different habits of self-expression, and different characteristics of emotional expression. Therefore, all aspects of social life are also different under the influence of context culture.

1.2. The Purpose and Significance of the Study

This paper aims to explore the differences in educational models between China and the West through the lens of the High-Low Context Theory. By examining the characteristics and manifestations of high and low context cultures, a deeper understanding of how these cultural factors influence educational practices can be gained.

The study of educational models in different cultures holds significance as it offers insights into the diverse approaches to teaching and learning worldwide. Furthermore, this study contributes to the cross-cultural education, which has been more and more widely discussed in recent years, by highlighting the importance of considering cultural factors in educational design and practice. It

emphasizes the need for educators to be culturally sensitive and adapt their teaching approaches to accommodate the diverse learning styles and values of students from different cultural backgrounds.

In general, this paper will provide a reference for further detailed discussion of the interaction between high-context culture and low-context culture and its impact on many other areas of society.

2. Overview of High-Low Context Culture Theory

2.1. Definition of High Context Culture and Low Context Culture

High-low context culture is used to describe the differences in communication styles and information transfer between different cultures. Edward Hall put forward that, "Most of the information transmitted by high-context culture exists in the material context or is internalized in the individual, and very few are in the clear and transmitted coded information; Low-context communication is the opposite, putting a lot of information in a clear code in order to make up for what is lost in context."

In high-context cultures, communication relies more on nonverbal cues, background knowledge, shared experiences and social norms to convey information. The expression of the language is relatively concise, and meanings are implied in the situation and need to be understood by the listener according to the context and background. While people in low-context cultures rely more on explicit and specific language expressions to convey information. Meanings in communication are conveyed directly and clearly, and are less dependent on non-verbal factors.

It should be noted that the division of high-low context culture is not absolute. There are some differences in the degree of context dependence among different cultures, but there may be some situations in between.

2.2. Characteristics and Differences of High Context Culture and Low Context Culture

By definition, we can summarize the characteristics of high-context culture as follows:

- Implicit
- Cryptic information (more non-verbal coding)
- Few outward reactions
- Distinction between inside and outside a social circle
- Intimate interpersonal relationships
- High commitment
- Value collectivism

Different from high context culture, low context culture has the following features:

- Explicit
- Clear information (more verbal coding)
- More outward reaction
- Flexible attitude towards inside and outside a social circle.
- Less intimate interpersonal relationships.
- Low commitment.
- Emphasis on individualism

3. The Manifestation of the Differences Between Chinese and Western Educational Models

There are some differences between Chinese and western education in concepts, methods, teacher-student relationship and evaluation system, etc. These common differences will be explained in detail below.

3.1. Different Educational Concepts

China and Britain have different educational ideas. Chinese education often focuses on the establishment of students' knowledge system, the imparting of basic knowledge and the cultivation of exam-taking ability. The goal of education is basically to go to higher education. Many people believe that the higher the ranking of the school a child is admitted to, the better the child will be. In addition, many Chinese parents often compare their children with others and may force them to attend cram schools or interest classes to make them stand out from others.

Different China, people in Western countries pay more attention to personal qualities rather than academic rankings in education. They focus on developing students' creativity, critical thinking and independent thinking skills, while also encouraging students to explore and develop personal interests. For example, British schools pay attention to the development of students' personalities and give students more opportunities for practice, exploration and self-creation. In addition, teachers and parents do not encourage students to compare themselves with others, but with themselves. They focus on developing students' self-confidence and stimulating their potential by encouraging them to develop their strengths and interests.

3.2. Different Educational Methods

Based on different teaching concepts, the teaching methods at home and abroad are different. Cramming is often used to describe the Chinese teaching style. Traditional Chinese education is teacher-centered passive teaching mode. Chinese teachers adopt a unified teaching standard and syllabus. Most teachers stand on the platform and impart knowledge by explaining textbooks, while students only need to listen carefully and take notes.

In contrast, the western education model focuses on the active participation of students and adopts student-centered teaching methods with diversified teaching forms, such as group cooperation, speech, debate, research, etc. At the same time, it also pays attention to the personality differences of students and respects the subjectivity of students. For example, British education has different curriculum systems to suit different students. British teaching is individualized teaching for individuals, and group teaching is the basic form of individualized teaching.

However, in recent years, China's education model has gradually moved closer to the West, especially at the university stage and beyond. Teachers are gradually aware of the need to cultivate and give play to students' subjective initiative.

3.3. Different Teacher-Student Relationships

There are also great differences between China and Britain in the relationship between teachers and students. China values respect for teachers, so Chinese teachers always have absolute authority in the classroom. Teachers and students have a superior and subordinate relationship, and there is a formal and respectful distance between teachers and students. Teachers are like elders to students, and students respect and obey teachers, and rarely question teachers. For example, when students have questions in Chinese class, they need to raise their hands first and then stand up to speak after the teacher's permission.

However, in the West, teacher-student relations tend to be more equal. Students are more inclined to regard teachers as friends, and they don't think that what teachers say is always right. They dare to question and refute the teacher's views in class and are more likely to express their own opinions and ideas.

3.4. Different Evaluation Systems

Chinese and western education systems have different ways of evaluating students. Chinese way to the evaluation of students mainly depends on test scores, especially good scores in important exams.

While the evaluation system in western countries is more comprehensive, including test scores, homework, classroom performance, project results, humanistic literacy, social ability and many other aspects, paying more attention to the overall development of students and individual differences.

4. The Analysis of the Differences Through High-Low Context Culture Theory

4.1. The Influence of High Context Culture on Chinese Education

First of all, in terms of teaching methods, because high-context culture emphasizes non-verbal transmission and implicit understanding, teachers tend to imply or guide students to explore the knowledge, rather than directly and explicitly express. Students are encouraged to read between the lines and understand what the teacher is saying.

Second, in the classroom atmosphere, due to the high-context culture's reliance on non-language expression and few outward reactions, Chinese students are more introverted in class and less willing to take the initiative to express their views. For example, Chinese students often make eye contact to indicate the teacher whether they has understood the knowledge, and they use silence to indicate thinking, acceptance or doubts. Therefore, the classroom atmosphere may be relatively quiet, and teachers need to encourage students to participate in discussions.

Third, in the relationship between teachers and students, high-context culture attaches importance to the distinction between inside and outside the circle and collective identity, so it emphasizes the maintenance of social norms and social order, which helps to build trust and respect, but at the same time, it may lead to a large distance between authorities, and students are reluctant to directly question or contradict teachers' views.

Fourthly, in terms of learning content, the emphasis on collectivism in high-context culture leads to the emphasis on cultural inheritance. In Chinese education, more attention is paid to the study of traditional culture and history, as well as the cultivation of students' inner cultivation, such as the cultivation of students' hard-working quality.

In general, the high-context culture has had a profound impact on the Chinese education model, which includes both positive aspects, such as cultivating students' observation and insight, and challenges, such as the need for more time to develop tacit understanding and understanding between teachers and students.

4.2. The Influence of Low Context Culture on Western Education

First, in terms of teaching methods, educators in low-context cultures usually emphasize clear communication methods. This means that during the teaching process, teachers will try to use clear language to convey information and ensure that students can understand the literal meaning of the content.

Second, in the classroom atmosphere, the low-context culture's reliance on clear communication makes teachers and students tend to express their ideas and opinions directly. And because interpersonal relationships are not so close in a low-context culture, students are more active in the classroom and dare to express their opinions without the shame of being different from others.

Third, in the relationship between teachers and students, because low-context culture attaches importance to individualism and emphasizes individual equality and freedom, the authority of teachers is often challenged by students. For example, Western teachers are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to managing classroom discipline.

Fourth, in terms of learning content, people in low-context culture pays more attention to the training of practical skills. In addition to imparting professional knowledge, the Western education model includes a lot of practical exercise and problem solving skills.

In general, low-context culture has exerted a great influence on the western education model, which includes positive aspects such as giving play to students' subjective initiative and cultivating their independent thinking, innovation and practical ability, and negative aspects such as students' resistance of following rules and paying too much attention to their own interests.

5. Summary

From the perspective of high-low context theory, this paper analyzes the differences between Chinese and western educational models. Through the analysis of high-low context culture theory, we can better understand the source of the difference between Chinese and western educational models. The culture of high and low context makes the differences to the education mode, and these differences is not only reflected in the structure of the education system and teaching methods, but also in the learning attitudes and values of students.

However, there are some limitations in this study. First, high-low context culture theory, while providing a useful analytical framework, may not cover all cultural and educational complexities. Education is diverse around the world, and with the continuous development of The Times and the continuous progress of society, the education system of various countries is also undergoing different degrees of innovation. Secondly, it is not enough to analyze the difference of education system only from the context culture theory.

Nowadays, the importance of cross-cultural research has been paid much attention, and the communication and cooperation between different cultures have been gradually enhanced. Educators, especially transnational teachers, should enhance their intercultural communication ability and flexibly use educational models and methods to meet the needs of different students. In addition, future research could further explore how to cultivate students' intercultural literacy in education so that they can better adapt to a diverse society.

To sum up, the high-low context culture theory provides us with a valuable analytical framework to help us understand the differences between Chinese and western education models more deeply. This research is of great significance for promoting the internationalization of education, promoting cultural exchanges and improving the quality of education.

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