The Differences in Teaching Methods Between China and the United States: From Teacher Roles to Student Participation

Yinan Liu*

Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, the United States

*Corresponding author: lyinan@upenn.edu

Abstract. More specifically, the researcher in this study will investigate teacher roles and student participation between Chinese educational system and American school. This contrasts with the Confucian background practiced in China, which enables a more authoritative approach to teaching that also defines students as passive listeners. In contrast, the American educational system views instructors more as facilitators who should create an atmosphere that encourages critical thinking and student engagement. This approach is rooted in the ideas of progressive educators like John Dewey. In order to ascertain how these various teaching strategies are influencing student engagement and information acquisition, this study employs a comparative approach. This study paper's methodology involves a thorough analysis of relevant literature on inquiry-based learning methodologies and cultural norms. The findings imply that there are differences in teacher-student interactions based on major variations in students' autonomy.The U.S. system is also intended to encourage critical thinking and an individual sort of exploration, while China's approach is more focused on structured learning that helps meet performance expectations. The study suggests that incorporating aspects from both systems may produce better results in higher achievement — and provide critical lessons for reforms to come in the two countries.

Keywords: Teacher Roles; Active Learning; Critical Thinking; Student Participation.

1. Introduction

As the learning mode in China and US is significantly different, comparison between these two worlds has become one of the important areas to study under international education. Under a heavy focus on Confucian virtues, China long insisted on having teachers stand on top and student sit down there to be fed.This approach has also resulted in students learning by rote and getting ready for significant exams. The Chinese have long been taught to respect their instructors, and this has slyly influenced the way they view tolerance for creativity in the classroom. On the other hand, student-centered and inquiry-based learning are encouraged in American education. Americans view instructors as facilitators who encourage students to ask questions on their own, research topics independently, and take initiative to complete tasks.. The constructivist approach attempts to cultivate a dynamic learning atmosphere through critical and creative problem-solving, as well as active participation in class discussions. These differences present varied results in student engagement, creativity and academic success as well as echoing different cultural values.

This is an important comparative study, as both have the potential to direct improvements in education.In the current globalized environment, developing a more thorough grasp of education as a whole requires learning more about the advantages and disadvantages of different teaching approaches. This knowledge may help make better decisions and enhance international teaching methods. This study will improve academic instructional approaches that are more in line with this evolving era by comparing student participation and teacher roles in China with those of modern learners in the US. It will achieve this by skillfully fusing independent research with academic achievement to help shape a more comprehensive intellectual..

The main focus of this study is a comparison of the responsibility of teacher and the participation of student in both Chinese and United States classrooms. To achieve a more concrete comparison of empirical data, this study utilizes qualitative analysis to examine the inquiry-based strategy in the U.S. alongside the authority-based approach in China.This approach enables a more thorough investigation

of the effects of these divergent educational frameworks on student engagement and learning. The study will look at how these variations affect students' achievement in terms of growing in their capacity for creativity, critical analysis, and problem-solving. The goal of the study is to identify the elements of both systems that can be merged, as well as to offer recommendations for modifications to education that support student autonomy while preserving teacher authority. The goal is to create a vision for education that is more global and balanced and equipped to address the changing needs of the twenty-first century.

2. Comparison of Teacher Roles: From Authority Figures to Guides

2.1. Traditional View of Teachers in China

One of the primary ways that educational systems differ is in how they treat teachers, which is a different role than in much of the United States. The Confucian traditions have major influence on the education system in China, with a view that instructors as the "authorities", who play an important role when making decisions in the classroom. Whereas American education places emphasis on the "guide" role of instructors, helping students to learn independently and foster analytical skills. In China's traditional educational system, the connection between teachers and students has always been vertical, with professors giving commands and students taking notes. The first is the "the world governing and serving" standard from ancient Chinese tradition education, which reflects education into opposition to humanism and utilitarianism. As a result, there is a one-way teacher-student interaction in an educational system that promotes respect for knowledge and teachers while embracing the authoritarian norms of education. Teachers have a lot of power over the transfer of knowledge, which limits what pupils can question or develop.

This unilateral teacher-student interaction where teachers are the only source of information and authority within their classroom, is the only universal way to be taught whereas a more pluralistic universal approach for students in compulsory education, depriving them of autonomy and ability to think critically. This ancient perspective thus affects not only the way that distribute knowledge, but also how social perceptions inflate the power of teachers well beyond their professional qualifications.

Although egalitarian and democratic teacher-student relations, which are normative in this modern society, have theoretically promoted more participation communication in the classroom; however,This kind of non-paternalistic communication got bogged down with both legal and social powers enjoyed by teachers under the long historied patriarchy. "Listening to the teacher" is seen as a key characteristic, frequently valued more highly than academic performance. This cultural bias has suppressed the imagination and independence of thought among students.

The omnipotence of the teacher remains too much alive in China's education, which creates a ceiling for how innovative or subversive our students' thoughts can become. Education reforms continue to change but one of the biggest challenges, how to manage teacher professional authority in relation to student autonomy and innovation remains the same. Throughout history, the concept of a teacher-student hierarchy has reduced student autonomy while idealizing and reifying the role of the teacher, always placing them in a position of institutional power. It fosters a culturally repressed conflict mode and an Eastern collectivist mentality of obedience that elevates uniformity and adherence to virtues and bases belonging on compliance rather than original thought or mind. Fighting against authority figures or rules, or challenging them, is a detrimental attitude as opposed to being obedient and submissive, which are sensible ways to handle issues [1].

It was during the establishment of The Peoples Republic of China in 1949, when communist dictatorship was born, that by directive followed immediately teachers identities could have been be transformed by this system. As a means of governance and education, the proletarian dictatorship was not just a thought. Teachers in state schools, charged with propagating the prevailing ideology of socialism to a new generation of socialist builders. Their identities and their jobs determined largely their work in favour of the proletarian revolution which made it inevitable that they propagated the state's political philosophy [2]. According to Bernestein (2000), education is a discourse-teaching

process in which the information imparted can only be made accessible when the moral foundation of social connections is also established on the basis of orderly principles; identities and positions must be consistent with these previously established moral standards [3]. This idea contends that classroom organization and discipline, in addition to knowledge transfer, are key components of teacher authority. The ideological foundation of teacher authority under the proletariat was strong and operated in two ways: instructors were expected to impart knowledge as well as ideologically uphold the political and moral standards set forth by the government. The academic and political outcome of the hierarchy was teacher authority. The state commodified classroom teaching speech to mould the views and values of pupils, safeguarding the existing setup of state and political support. As Bernstein said, teaching is from moral and social values before it is about knowledge and skills. This teacher autarky is both scholarly and, as demonstrated, intensely political. It was among these and similar transformations that the authority of the state solidified over the education system, in teaching discourse and in teachers' work for proletariat dictatorships, which happened both from knowledge transfer and by consolidating pupil identities.

2.2. The Guiding Role of Teachers in the U.S.

Since American history has evolved — from Francis W. Parker, with the theory of student-centered learning in elementary education to John Dewey and the progressive movement — putting students at the center has remains a tradition. At the end of the 19th century Parker challenged rote memorization and standardized testing in favor of a system which treated students as 'whole' children instead of only besting them intellectually.In light of this, Dewey maintained that education had to be centered on the child, a viewpoint that is highlighted by his most frequently cited statement: "The child is the sun around which objects of educative enterprise revolve; he is not part of system an educational institution" [4]. In Dewey's progressive educational vision, students would engage in work that was important and applicable to their daily lives. Additionally, links between classroom activities should entail expression on a democratic level, if not more.

This approach, which focused on the student and readily naturalized in the twentieth century by educators such William H. Kilpatrick with later reformers like Theodore Sizer in 1984. The coalition's "Common Principles" echoed values in Dewey's progressive vision: teaching through inquiry and personalized learning; it intended to reform traditional modes of instruction promoting both collaboration among peers and individualized opportunities for learning [5].

Dewey's legacy is still evident today in modern US teaching practices. For example, Schleicher (2012) and Benavides (2010) argue that professors should adopt innovative state-specific forms of pedagogy to better prepare students for the differing types of needs in the new millennium. This view holds one way to further expand on Dewey's vision is through the use of technology and customizing instruction according to the various needs of students, recognizing that contemporary learning requires flexible and new approaches [6].

In addition, instructors move from positions of authority to guides for student-driven inquiry. Instead, learning should be in line with what Dewey (1938) claimed it should be: an exploratory and productive process where students are challenged to engage critically with the material at hand, with guidance and scaffolding from their teacher when needed. This constructivist approach, which emphasizes active experience learning, is highly prevalent in American schools today [7-8].

By stark contrast, the education system of established culture such as China often comply instructors are pivotal high-ranking figures in classroom-pedagogy field concerning meaning-through-end: the end not in mutual research but made-for-knowledge-handout. Nevertheless, the American educational system will always be inquiry-driven, student-centered, and emphasize personal relevance since these qualities are ingrained in progressive education and its ability to withstand all contemporary storms.This reading of the history of education in America emphasizes a process that has been gradually taking place over time: the shift from the teacher's position as the custodian of knowledge to the facilitator of learning, as proposed by progressive ideas and modified by more recent changes.

3. Student Participation: From Passive Reception to Active Exploration

3.1. Chinese Students' Participation Style

First, Ballard(1989a) noticed that many Western commentators depicted Chinese students as 'diligent, obedient, hardworking, passive and examination-oriented'(p. 282). Such a perspective constructs some sort of school goat among the habits of Chinese students, implying that they are more concerned with learning answers and correct answers than thinking critically (Wong 2016). These understandings influence how people see the learning habits of Chinese students — in particular, as more exchange between China and Western environments takes place. However, these labels might be misdirecting us of the true learning processes.

A survey of Chinese undergraduates found that over thirty percent held views that passive learning behavior is inextricably tied to cultural backgrounds, particularly Chinese culture; That is essentially the Chinese cultural practice of saving face. Pupils worry that if they give the wrong answer, they'll look foolish and ruin their reputation [9]. Huang and Cowden (2009) claim that defying authority, particularly a teacher, is highly shameful in Chinese society [10]. Students who are raised with such respect for authority are more likely to have a subservient mindset and to behave quietly and passively in class..

Addressing Chinese kids' passive learning by focusing on its cultural nature would be a mistake, though. The very nature of the education system, like for instance teacher-based methods and a highly exam oriented system has great influence on how its students learn [11]. Except that after 12 years of such an educational environment many students have been conditioned to rote memorization and are prevented from being able to think critically, or nurture transferable skills. That is distinct from the Western education system which tries to encourage free thinking.

Meanwhile, quantum Forthcoming (Nan 2007) criticizes the notion of passive learning. He says the traditional Chinese educational philosophy does not support quiet learning but encourages students to be engaged in and questioning what is being taught. The author of Nan contrasts the Chinese term "学问" (xuewen), which refers to both learning and inquiry, with a belief that gaining knowledge is an on-going, ever-changing process [11]. Therefore, contemporary criticisms of Chinese education are based on the distortion of ancient ways of learning, which complicates the current image of passive learning.

3.2. Active Exploration by U.S. Students

Instead, active learning involves presenting students with problems that require them to deeply engage with the concepts at hand and reflect on how they apply their knowledge.The method prompts students to monitor, on an ongoing basis, either their understanding or their ability to cope with subject-related concepts or hurdles. When students engage or contribute, learning happens. This helps keep the learners engaged both mentally and physically with the diverse tools like information collection, analysis, problem-solving [12]. That is to say, the notion that an educated, literate individual who is also a critical thinker is not novel in theory and can be traced back to the past In order to live a sensible life, a student needs apply dialectical reasoning and systemic questioning, according to the Socratic model of inquiry [13]. In US higher education, it is both a learning objective for students and, quite literally, a fundamental assigned to instructors. All such instructors for fields with specific academic titles should first undergo critical thinking training before being permitted to mentor others in a course. This program presents its main objective as shifting the focus of instructors' roles from imparting knowledge to promoting critical thinking and conversation among students.. Student engagement inside the classroom is greatly increased with this instructional strategy as students are stimulated to question, reason, and apply information at a higher level [14].

Unlike their main role in China, that is to impart knowledge, American teachers are trained as facilitators who guide students utilizing critical thinking skills to reasonable and actionable conclusions. The teacher has dominated the classroom in China for centuries, as students were

expected to listen attentively and soak up knowledge. A greater focus on exam skills is often prioritised over the nurturing of a more critical and inquisitive mindset, with an example being China.

In the U.S., though, critical thinking courses are standalone subjects.n addition to teaching content, teachers are expected to elicit from their students how what they have learned in class relates to real-world situations. This process helps students develop critical thinking skills, which help them see problems in the real world and work to solve them. Though mostly inside academic and practical bounds, these high expectations have led to a remarkable success in producing self-reliant problem solvers.

This system is still based on exam-oriented education as a barometer to evaluate students' learning outcomes; in contrast, China's higher education using this examination model and carry out the reform of carrying forward. With a focus on rote memorization; learning diseased characteristics by repeating them over and over, but without development of thoughtful response. In the classroom, teachers rule supreme with students rarely given a chance for independent discovery of their own leading to fostering critical thinking use. Cooperative learning is considered a relatively recent teaching concept and practice which has its roots in the United States of America (USA) beginning in the early 1970s before it grew significantly between the mid-1970s until levels topped-out during most of the 1980s and became notable for its innovativeness and success [15].

At any level of education, it is the output in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude. In order for students to be able to dissect what they read and put it back together in a logical manner, in addition to passively comprehending it, cognitive learning aids in their understanding and processing of what they read. The capacity for comprehensive interaction and problem-solving is the foundation of competency-based behavioral learning. Affective learning is about fostering positive attitudes and getting pupils to consider their thoughts, feelings, and preferences in relation to the subject matter being studied.

Active learning is a reflection-based method in which students actively search for answers to questions posed or generated by themselves. They are encouraged to resolve problems and learn new things or improve on any tasks that have been assigned to them. These interactions prompt students to reflect on their beliefs and opinions, put those into action, then discuss them after. Through these tasks and activities, educators submerge students in their learning experience to participate actively instead of simply receiving passively.

This class is an active learning based course for the reason that it has been made to ensure student engagement and their interaction with subject matter; thereby not only knowledge but also critical thinking process developed in students and a sense of relatedness towards content [16].

4. Conclusion

Fourth and lastly, this comparison of Chinese and American educational systems reflects the large gap between teaching modes to reveal that culture plays a significant role in shaping education.The centuries-old Chinese educational system, which has its roots in Confucian philosophy, mostly depends on a route of authority and discipline led by teachers. This approach fosters a deep respect for knowledge and educators, but it also far too frequently results in passive learners, which limits students' ability to grow as critical thinkers and self-sufficient problem solvers. On the other hand, student-focused learning, guided discovery learning, and critical thinking are given top priority in the American educational system. By placing a strong emphasis on student involvement, creativity, and critical thinking, this paradigm contributes to a more dynamic and rich learning environment.

Yet instead of developing a dichotomous view of these two systems separately, the results from this research suggest that leveraging forces native to each can offer an optimal form in education. A reconceptualised learning framework that combines the structure and discipline of China's teacher-led approach with active inquiry and critical thinking intrinsic to the American system could therefore be more inclusive and ultimately more effective. Such a hybrid paradigm would support the

acquisition of knowledge but also creativity, independent thinking, and learning to learn life-based skills.

The field has evolved in response to enhanced technology and global interconnectedness, and to seek out new pedagogical techniques that are both flexible and culturally responsive. Best practices from Eastern and Western educational traditions are combined to create a vision for pupils that can handle the complex issues of a more interconnected global society. To ensure that the upcoming generation of students has the foundational knowledge and innovative mentality required for success, more research is required to determine how these hybrid models might be modified for use in different learning environments.

References

[1] Kwang, N.A. (Translated by Li Chaohui). Liberating the Creativity of Asian Students [M]. Beijing: China Light Industry Press, 2005:159.

[2] Lin, J. Chinese Teachers' Social Status and Authority in the Classroom: A Historical Perspective. McGill Journal of Education / Revue Des Sciences De l'éducation De McGill, 28(002). 1993, Retrieved from https://mje.mcgill.ca/article/view/8099

[3] Bernstein, B. Class, Codes and Control Volume IV: The Structuring of Pedagogic Discourse. London: Routledge. 1990, http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780203011263

[4] Dewey, John. School and Society. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.1900.

[5] Kaput, K. Evidence for Student-Centered Learning. Education evolving. 2018.

[6] Ellerani, P., & Gentile, M. The role of teachers as facilitators to develop empowering leadership and school communities supported by the method of cooperative learning. Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 93, 12-17, 2013.

[7] Dewey, J. Experience and education. New York: Macmillan. 1938.

[8] Ballard, B. Sink or swim - in class and at home. In P. K. Browne & E. C. Dale (Eds.), Overseas students: Educational opportunity and Challenges (pp. 41): The Australian College of Education, Curtin, ACT. 1989a.

[9] Yi, C. H. E. N. Investigation of Chinese students' passive learning in EAP classroom. US-China Foreign Language, 357.2016.

[10] HUANG, J. Y., & Cowden, P. A. Are Chinese students really quiet, passive and surface learners?—A cultural studies perspective. Canadian and International Education, 38, 78-80. 2009.

[11] NAN, H. J. The selection of Nan Hanjin (Vol. 1, pp. 199-200). Shanghai: Fudan Press. 2007.

[12] Michael, J. Where's the evidence that active learning works?. Advances in physiology education. 2006.

[13] Paul, R. W. Critical thinking in North America: A new theory of knowledge, learning, and literacy. Argumentation, 3, 197-235. 1989.

[14] Miao, S. (n.d.). The influence of critical thinking movement on general education in the USA. School of Humanity, East China University of Politics and Law.2007.

[15] Zhu, Shizhong. The Implications of the U.S. Applied Talent Training Model for Undergraduate Education in China. Jiangsu Higher Education, 5, 147-149. 2010

[16] Silberman, M. Active learning. Boston: Trustco. 1996.