



Nova Science Press

Journal of Psychology & Education

Vol. 1, No. 2 (2026)

**An Analysis of the Differences, Similarities and Integration Paths of
Chinese and Western Education from the Perspective of History and
Culture**

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Journal of Psychology & Education • Vol. 1, No. 2 (2026)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.66581/83nvjj17>

Received 12 March 2026 • Accepted: 20 March 2026 • Published 31 March 2026

CITATION

Wen, Y., & Han, X. (2026). An Analysis of the Differences, Similarities and Integration Paths of Chinese and Western Education from the Perspective of History and Culture. *Journal of Psychology & Education*, 1(2), 17. <https://doi.org/10.66581/83nvjj17>

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Abstract

In today's era of accelerating globalization and deepening internationalization of education, the exchanges and collisions between Chinese and Western education are becoming increasingly frequent. Clarifying the similarities and differences between the two not only helps to deeply understand the essential laws of education under different cultural backgrounds but also provides references for China's educational reform. The different cultural origins of China and the West determine their distinct paths. As is well known, education, as the core carrier of civilization inheritance and talent cultivation, has formed distinctive educational systems in China and the West due to differences in historical accumulation, cultural genes, and social structures. While there are essential commonalities, significant differences exist in educational concepts, teaching models, evaluation mechanisms, and educational goals. However, we should rationally approach these differences and learn from each other. This article, based on the cultural roots and social historical development backgrounds of China and the West, systematically sorts out their similarities and differences, deeply analyzes the underlying reasons for the differences, objectively examines their respective strengths and weaknesses, and explores feasible paths for the integration and mutual learning of Chinese and Western education in the new era.

Key words: Education in China and the West; Historical and cultural background; Differences

Different historical cultures determine different educational characteristics and educational environments. There is no doubt that there are significant differences between Chinese and Western education. As a social practice activity unique to human society for inheriting culture, cultivating talents, and promoting progress, education is

deeply influenced by the historical accumulation of a specific region, the core nucleus of cultural genes, the social structure form, and the mainstream value concepts, presenting distinct regional and ethnic characteristics. Chinese education is rooted in the continuous Huaxia agricultural civilization of five thousand years, with Confucian ritual and music culture and the idea of moderation as its core spiritual foundation. It has undergone iterative development of ancient private school education, modern new-style education, and modern quality-oriented education, and has undergone thousands of years of inheritance and innovation, forming an educational characteristic that values the foundation, advocates diligence, and emphasizes collectivity. Western education originated from ancient Greek civilization and city-state culture. It has gone through religious education in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance movement, the Enlightenment, and the rise of practicalist education during the Industrial Revolution and the improvement of the modern education system, forming an educational paradigm that respects individual nature, encourages innovation and exploration, and values freedom and independence, which is adapted to the development of Western society. Although Chinese and Western education have formed distinctive educational systems due to differences in cultural roots, social structure, and development needs, they share a high degree of commonality in the essence of education, social mission, and educational laws. This article will take a holistic perspective to explore the commonalities and differences between Chinese and Western education, deeply explore the cultural logic and social causes behind them, and have both theoretical value and practical significance, so as to provide reference.

I. The Impact of History and Culture on Education in China and the West

In the context of globalization and educational modernization, clarifying the factors influencing education in China and the West can not only help better understand the essence of the educational differences between the two, but also promote mutual learning, compatibility, and mutual advancement between them. The agricultural civilization centered on Confucian ethics and the social structure of family and state integration in China, and the ocean civilization centered on

humanistic rationality and the individual-oriented value system in the West, respectively, have laid the foundation for the education of the East and the West. Chinese education is rooted in the 5,000-year-old agricultural civilization and the Confucian ethical system, emphasizing collective orientation, moral education, and knowledge transmission. The core cultural genes of traditional Chinese education are Confucianism, while absorbing the ideas of Daoism that adapts to nature and Legalism that combines rites and laws, and constructing an educational system with "rites" as the behavioral code and "virtue" as the value core, which has become the spiritual mainline throughout the history of ancient Chinese education. In the pre-Qin period, Confucius established private schools and proposed viewpoints such as "education for all" and "teaching according to individual aptitude", breaking the monopoly of education by the nobility and establishing the civilian-oriented attribute of education. During the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, adopting Dong Zhongshu's suggestion and implementing the cultural policy of "abolishing all schools of thought and upholding Confucianism alone", Confucianism became the orthodox ideology in the feudal society, and education has since been deeply integrated with state governance, social ethics, and talent selection. Successive dynasties' educational systems, teaching contents, and value orientations have continuously evolved based on this foundation. While Western education originated from the rational spirit of ancient Greece and has undergone the 洗礼 of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, highlighting individual orientation, rational speculation, and innovative exploration. The "method of the midwife" proposed by Socrates, the education in Plato's Republic, and the disciplinary study advocated by Aristotle laid the foundation for Western education to value rational speculation, logical reasoning, and individual development. During the Middle Ages, the church monopolized education, although it was mainly focused on religious indoctrination, it retained the transmission lineage of classical academia. The Renaissance and the Enlightenment completely reshaped Western education. The Renaissance advocated humanism, breaking the constraints of religion on human nature, emphasizing human value and

dignity, and advocating that education should promote the harmonious development of individuals' physical and mental aspects. The Enlightenment promoted rationalism, advocated freedom, equality, and science, and promoted education towards citizen cultivation and scientific exploration. After the Industrial Revolution, Western education further integrated scientificism and pragmatism, forming an educational tradition that values individuality, innovation, and evidence-based thinking, and the realization of individual value has become one of the core goals of education. There is no absolute superiority or inferiority between Chinese and Western education; they are cultural products that adapt to their respective social needs.

2. The high degree of alignment in the essence of education is the inherent logic for the convergence of Chinese and Western education paths

Although there are significant differences in cultural inheritance, teaching content, teaching methods, and external manifestations between Chinese and Western education, they share a high degree of compatibility in core purposes, basic functions, and ultimate goals. Education is a common human practice that transcends regions, ethnicities, and cultures. Although Chinese and Western education differ due to historical contexts, cultural inheritance background, national conditions, and social conditions, they both belong to important branches of human educational civilization and always revolve around the core of education for nurturing individuals. Their fundamental purposes, social functions, and educational goals share a high degree of internal commonality.

Firstly, the core goal is to cultivate individuals. Whether it is the "cultivating virtue and fostering talents" advocated by Chinese education or the "all-round education" promoted by Western education, the ultimate goal is to cultivate individuals with comprehensive development in morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor, achieving physical and mental health and personality perfection. Although the expression methods and cultural contexts are different, the ultimate goals are highly compatible. Ancient Chinese education pursued "self-cultivation, family governance, state governance, and world peace", emphasizing the cultivation of virtues such as benevolence, righteousness, propriety,

wisdom, and trustworthiness, striving to cultivate individuals with both moral and intellectual qualities, integrating moral cultivation with academic improvement. Modern quality-oriented education even emphasizes people-oriented principles, not only focusing on students' academic performance and knowledge reserves, but also paying attention to the coordinated development of students' physical, psychological, intellectual, and moral aspects. Western education is also long-standing. From ancient Greece's "harmonious education", to modern Rousseau's naturalistic education, Dewey's pragmatism education, to modern general education, it all focuses on the development and improvement of individuals, aiming to make each individual an independent, complete, and valuable person. Looking at the educational practices of China and the West, both have abandoned simple knowledge indoctrination and mechanical skill training, taking "education for nurturing individuals" as the core of education, highlighting the human-centered nature of education, and reaching a consensus on this point.

Secondly, they undertake the mission of cultural inheritance and social development. Education is an important link in cultural inheritance and the core driving force for social progress. This function is the common responsibility of both Chinese and Western education. Chinese education has always been tasked with inheriting excellent traditional Chinese culture and promoting national spirit, passing on Chinese civilization from generation to generation. At the same time, education helps the country cultivate various talents, promoting social development, technological progress, and national prosperity. Education has become the core means of inheriting Chinese civilization and strengthening national cultural confidence, allowing the profound and extensive Chinese civilization to remain vibrant in intergenerational transmission. Western education also bears the dual mission of cultural inheritance and social development. On the one hand, it inherits the essence of ancient Greek and Roman cultures, Christian culture, Enlightenment thought, etc., safeguarding the roots of Western culture; on the other hand, through innovative education, civic literacy education, it cultivates citizens who are adapted to social development, promoting the process of social democratization and legalization. Both

have enabled individual growth and social development to be mutually empowering, demonstrating the social value of education.

Thirdly, they follow the basic laws of education. The educational practices of all times and places prove that following educational laws is the fundamental prerequisite for improving teaching quality and achieving educational goals. This principle runs through the entire process of the development of Chinese and Western education. Both Chinese and Western education have, through long-term practice, summarized teaching methods and educational principles that conform to human cognitive laws, forming a common educational logic. In the teaching process, both emphasize progressive learning and individualized teaching, focusing on stimulating students' interest in learning, guiding students from passive acceptance to active exploration. In the teacher-student relationship, both recognize the guiding role of teachers and the dominant position of students, pursuing interaction and cooperation between teachers and students. In educational content, both cover core modules such as basic knowledge, humanistic literacy, and practical ability, balancing fundamentality and practicality. Whether it is China's "reviewing past knowledge to gain new insights" or the "inquiry-based teaching" in the West, both are the scientific application of educational laws and reflect the commonality of educational practices.

3. Different historical and cultural backgrounds have shaped the diverse forms of education in China and the West

The differences in education between China and the West are the result of the combined influence of historical traditions, cultural values, political systems, etc, and are also the inevitable outcome of the long-term historical evolution. These differences are mainly manifested in aspects such as educational concepts, teaching models, curriculum design, evaluation systems, and teacher-student relationships. Such differences run through the entire process of education, from the top-level educational concepts to specific implementation paths, forming two completely different educational styles, each with its own advantages and disadvantages.

Firstly, there is a fundamental difference in educational concepts. Chinese education places more emphasis on the collective orientation, which is the concrete

manifestation of core cultural concepts such as Confucianism's "family and state are integrated" and "the rise and fall of the country is the responsibility of every citizen" and "propriety, righteousness, wisdom, and faith" in the field of education. After thousands of years of inheritance and accumulation, it has become an indispensable spiritual core of Chinese education. It emphasizes the responsibility and commitment of individuals to the collective, society, and the country, and advocates that individual values should be integrated into collective values. It can be said that collective interests are the starting point and destination of individual interests. In the educational process, more emphasis is placed on cultivating students' sense of collective honor, teamwork spirit, and social responsibility, requiring students to abide by rules, be humble and courteous, and consider the overall situation. Chinese education places greater emphasis on cultivating students' collective honor, teamwork spirit, and social responsibility, and requires students to follow rules, be humble and courteous, and consider the overall situation. Western education adheres to individualism, with the self-centered approach. It stems from the humanistic spirit of ancient Greece, the liberation of human nature during the Renaissance, and rationalism during the Enlightenment, emphasizing individual independence, freedom, and rights, and advocating the 张扬 of individuality, self-actualization, and innovation breakthrough. Education focuses on developing individual potential, satisfying interests, and promoting individual development, respecting students' uniqueness and differences, and encouraging students to express themselves, challenge authority, and pursue personal values.

Secondly, the teaching models have different focuses. The Chinese educational model centers on knowledge transmission, employing "instructive" and "motivating" teaching methods, emphasizing the systematicness, completeness, and solidity of basic knowledge. Classroom teaching is led by the teacher, who systematically explains theoretical knowledge based on the prescribed textbooks and teaching syllabus. Students consolidate their knowledge through listening, taking notes, memorizing, and practicing problems. Under this model, students have a solid foundation in basic knowledge, rigorous logical thinking, and a solid academic

foundation. However, there are also issues such as insufficient classroom interaction, lack of student initiative, and weak practical ability training. The Western educational model centers on ability cultivation, which is of the "incentive" and "exploration" type. It focuses on cultivating students' critical thinking, innovation ability, practical ability, and autonomous learning ability. Classroom teaching is centered on students, with teachers playing the roles of guides and organizers. Through group discussions, case analyses, and field research, teachers encourage and motivate students to independently explore, collaborate, and learn. The aim is to cultivate students' ability to think independently. The teaching process is not confined to the content of the textbooks, and it encourages students to broaden their horizons and express unique opinions, emphasizing the flexible application and practical transformation of knowledge. Therefore, students' ability to innovate, autonomy, and solve practical problems are more prominent compared to Chinese education, but they also have relatively weak basic knowledge and a lack of systematic knowledge structure.

Thirdly, the curriculum designs vary from one country to another. The curriculum design in Chinese education exhibits characteristics of standardization and uniformity. The national authorities uniformly formulate teaching outlines and curriculum standards, so the curriculum systems, teaching contents, and teaching schedules across the country are basically the same. This curriculum design ensures the fairness and standardization of education, allowing all students to receive education of the same quality. However, it is difficult to take into account the differences in students' interests and individual development, which to some extent limits the students' ability to showcase their specialties. In contrast, the curriculum design in Western education presents characteristics of individualization and diversification. The curriculum system is relatively flexible and open, and schools have greater autonomy in curriculum design. Students can choose course contents based on their own interests, specialties, and career plans. In addition to core basic courses, a large number of elective courses, interest courses, and practical courses are offered, covering multiple fields. At the same time, cross-disciplinary courses and practical courses are emphasized, integrating knowledge learning with life practice,

social needs, and other aspects. This curriculum design fully respects students' individual differences and meets the needs for diversified development. However, it also has obvious drawbacks. It can lead to fragmented knowledge and a lack of systematic academic literacy among students.

Fourthly, the evaluation system is different. The Chinese education evaluation system is centered on exam scores, emphasizing the "teaching" of teachers and the "learning" of students in the teaching process. The college entrance examination is an important standard for evaluating students, teachers, and schools, and scores also become an important indicator for measuring students' learning outcomes. The evaluation method is relatively simple, mainly based on written tests, focusing on the examination of knowledge memory and problem-solving abilities, while neglecting students' moral cultivation, practical ability, innovative thinking, and interest and specialties. This evaluation system has the advantages of fairness and objectivity, and is also an important standard for the country to select talents, but it has also given rise to problems such as "only focusing on scores" and "exam-oriented education", increasing students' academic burden, stifling students' innovative vitality, and easily causing students to lose their interest in learning. The Western education evaluation system is oriented towards comprehensive qualities, adopting diversified evaluation methods, comprehensively considering students' classroom performance, homework completion, practical experience, examination scores, teacher comments, and peer evaluations, not only focusing on academic achievements, but also emphasizing students' moral cultivation, teamwork, innovative thinking, social responsibility, etc. College admission not only refers to examination scores, but also combines students' social practice, special awards, personal statements, recommendation letters, etc., emphasizing students' all-round development and potential exploration. This evaluation system can comprehensively display students' comprehensive literacy, but it also has strong subjectivity, difficult standard unification, and high difficulty in ensuring fairness.

Fifthly, the teacher-student relationship is different. In Chinese education, the teacher-student relationship highlights "teacher's dignity", teachers have a relatively

high authoritative position, and students have a respectful and reverential attitude towards teachers, obeying teachers' teachings and management. In class, students rarely question teachers' viewpoints, and teacher-student interaction is mostly one-way teaching and imparting, lacking equal communication and discussion. This teacher-student relationship helps maintain classroom order, ensures the smooth progress of teaching, inherits the traditional virtue of respecting teachers and valuing education, but it also suppresses students' individuality and the development of critical thinking. Western education pursues equal dialogue between teachers and students, with equal status between teachers and students, and a collaborative relationship like friends between them. This relationship paradigm is rooted in the core cultural concepts of Western humanism and freedom and equality. Teachers encourage students to boldly question, actively ask questions, even engage in debates with teachers, respect students' different opinions, and are willing to communicate with students on an equal footing. To a certain extent, this can stimulate students' independent thinking ability and creative ability, create a relaxed and active classroom atmosphere, so Western students are relatively more confident, more flamboyant, and have stronger creative ability, but it also easily leads to loose classroom order, and some students lack rules awareness and reverence.

It can be seen that the core advantages of Chinese education lie in solid basic knowledge, diligent learning attitude, strong sense of rules and collective honor, and high educational fairness. It can lay a solid academic foundation for students and cultivate their sense of responsibility and teamwork spirit. However, it is shortcoming in the cultivation of innovation ability, independent ability, and practical ability, with a clear exam-oriented orientation, and limited individual development. The core advantage of Western education lies in outstanding innovation ability, critical thinking, independent ability, and full development of individuality. It has well-developed practical and comprehensive quality cultivation. However, it has weak basic knowledge, lack of discipline awareness, and fragmented knowledge system, and it is difficult to ensure educational fairness.

4. Analysis of the Reasons for the Differences in Education between China

and the West

Firstly, the differences stem from distinct historical and cultural roots. Chinese education is rooted in Confucian culture, where Confucianism emphasizes "benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faithfulness" as well as the concept of "moderation". It advocates collective supremacy and an orderly hierarchy. This cultural gene has shaped the characteristic of Chinese education that prioritizes the collective, adheres to norms, and emphasizes inheritance. Additionally, the ancient Chinese imperial examination system lasted for thousands of years, fostering the social consensus of "achieving success through learning" and establishing the traditional educational concept of "judging merit based on scores", which has had a profound impact on modern educational models. Western education originated from the maritime civilization of ancient Greece, valuing adventure, freedom, and exploration. The Renaissance and the Enlightenment further strengthened humanism and individualism, shaping Western education that prioritizes individuality, innovation, and critical thinking, making respect for individuals, equal dialogue, and the courage to question the core cultural elements of Western education.

Secondly, The social structure and value orientation are different. In traditional Chinese society, which was dominated by agricultural civilization, it was a patriarchal society that emphasized the overall interests of the family, the collective, and the state, and stressed social harmony and stability. Education was supposed to serve the overall development needs of society and cultivate individuals who could adapt to collective life and abide by social rules, so that individuals could consciously integrate into the collective and contribute to it, thereby achieving long-term social stability. Modern Chinese society adheres to the value orientation of collectivism, based on the development of the country and the rejuvenation of the nation. School education shoulders the important mission of cultivating socialist builders and successors. It further strengthens the educational concept of collective-centeredness, guiding students to establish a sense of family and country, a sense of collective honor, and a sense of social responsibility, integrating personal growth into the overall development of the country, and achieving the unity of individual value and social

value. Western society is based on industrial and commercial civilization, advocating individual struggle, free competition, and the spirit of contract, emphasizing individual rights and self-actualization. The social value orientation is centered on individualism, encouraging individuals to break free from constraints, pursue individuality, and realize their own value. In this social atmosphere, education naturally centers on individual development, respecting individuality and encouraging innovation.

Thirdly, the educational system and policy orientation are different. In China, the planning and development of education, as well as policy formulation, are uniformly coordinated and designed by the national education authorities. Local governments and schools are responsible for the implementation of the policies to ensure the fairness and standardization of education. The curriculum setting, teaching methods, and evaluation system are highly unified. In the West, a system of educational decentralization is more commonly implemented, with notable examples including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany. Local governments and schools have greater autonomy in education.

5. Integration and Mutual Learning of Chinese and Western Education and Feasible Paths

Firstly, In terms of educational philosophy, balance the collective orientation and individual orientation to achieve coordinated development. Abandon the extreme and one-sided thinking, and integrate collectivism and individualism organically. While firmly adhering to and inheriting the core essence of Chinese education, unswervingly promoting collectivism and patriotism, guiding students to establish a sense of the overall situation, dedication spirit and rule awareness, and resolutely resisting extreme individualism, egoism and other erroneous values, ensuring that students grow in line with the development of society, the rejuvenation of the nation and the progress of the country, we must also absorb the Western education's respect for individuality and encouragement of innovation, fully respecting students' individual differences, interests preferences, talents and specialties, providing students with appropriate autonomy choice space and a stage for individual development, stimulating students'

learning initiative, independent thinking ability and innovative vitality. Achieve the symbiosis and two-way empowerment of collective value and individual value, cultivating new era individuals with both responsibility and unique personalities.

Secondly, in terms of teaching mode, the transmission of practical knowledge and the cultivation of abilities aim to create an efficient classroom. We adhere to the principle of upholding tradition and innovating while learning from each other's strengths to retain the advantages of Chinese education in laying a solid foundation for knowledge, strengthening the systematicness and rigor of the knowledge framework. At the same time, we also draw on the heuristic, inquiry-based, and project-based teaching models from the West to break away from the traditional "one-way indoctrination" classroom model and incorporate practical sections such as classroom interaction, group discussions, case analysis, and field research. Gradually, we shift the role of teachers from mere knowledge instructors to guides for students' learning, encouraging students to shift from passive acceptance to active exploration, and continuously enhancing their critical thinking, innovation ability, and practical ability, truly achieving a balanced and collaborative improvement in knowledge transmission and ability cultivation.

Thirdly, in terms of curriculum design, a balance is struck between standardization and individualization, enriching the curriculum system. While adhering to the unified national curriculum standards and ensuring the fairness of basic education, we encourage localities and schools to, based on local regional cultural characteristics, school mission, students' age characteristics and interest demands, gradually increase the proportion of elective courses, special courses, and practical courses, granting schools and students more autonomy in course selection, and achieving a balance between uniform standards and individual development, allowing the curriculum to safeguard educational fairness while also releasing individual vitality. At the same time, we must also prevent the problem of fragmented subject systems and weak basic knowledge due to blind pursuit of individualization.

Fourthly, in the evaluation system, establish a diversified evaluation mechanism and eliminate the sole focus on test scores. Based on the new requirements of the new

era, abandon the single exam-oriented evaluation model that emphasizes only test scores and academic achievements, incorporate the Western concept of comprehensive evaluation, and construct a diversified evaluation system that is both objective, comprehensive, and developmental. For example, evaluate students based on their academic performance, comprehensive qualities, and special skills according to certain weights. Include moral cultivation, teamwork, innovative practice, and interest specialties in the evaluation scope, balancing the objectivity and comprehensiveness of the evaluation. This not only ensures the fairness of talent selection but also fully showcases students' comprehensive qualities, helping them achieve all-round development and healthy growth.

Fifthly, in the teacher-student relationship, balance the respect for teachers' dignity with equal dialogue, and build a harmonious relationship. We should inherit the traditional virtue of respecting teachers and valuing education, maintain the reasonable authority of teachers, ensure classroom order and teaching quality, and at the same time draw on the teacher-student interaction model of equal dialogue in Western education, transform the traditional one-way teaching model, encourage students to let go of concerns, boldly question, actively express personal opinions, and actively participate in classroom discussions. Teachers should actively change their role positioning, from the high-ranking disseminator to a guide and listener who is both a teacher and a friend, communicate thoughts and academic discussions with students in an equal and respectful manner, patiently respond to students' questions and ideas, tolerate different viewpoints, and create a relaxed and orderly, mutually beneficial teaching atmosphere.

From the above, it can be seen that Chinese and Western education are rooted in different cultural soils and social contexts, adapting to their respective development needs and value orientations. Essentially, they are two educational paradigms with distinct focuses, mutual complementarity, and synergy. Blindly promoting Western education while denying the essence of local education, or adhering to traditional educational models while rejecting advanced foreign experiences, are all extreme and one-sided educational perceptions. They neither conform to the objective laws of

educational development nor can they meet the core requirements of talent cultivation in the new era. In the context of educational globalization, the integration and mutual learning of Chinese and Western education is an inevitable trend. Only by maintaining an objective and rational, open and inclusive attitude, breaking through cultural barriers and cognitive biases, basing ourselves on the actual situation of our education and the goals of education, promoting the deep integration and mutual learning of Chinese and Western education, precisely drawing on the strengths of each other, and combining the advantages of the two educational models, can we solve the current problems in education development and promote the steady progress of our education towards greater diversity and higher quality.

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