

Exploring the Humanist Educational Concepts and Philosophical Foundations in The Chinese And American Education Systems

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Abstract

Background: Humanist educational practices rely on holistic development, critical thinking, moral education and ideological background of society and culture. But like most concepts, the Chinese and American education systems, which were formed under the different historic ideological trajectories, have made these concepts unique in their own way. This review of these systems then discusses their philosophical underpinnings and their educational practices.

Objective: This review seeks to explore and compare: the humanist educational concepts and philosophical foundations in Chinese and American education systems, and important similarities and differences in education.

Methods: A systematic search across academic databases was done following PRISMA guidelines, which identified ten relevant studies published between 1990 and 2024. This review focused on humanist concepts, philosophical foundations and cross cultural educational practices. Recurring patterns, philosophical themes, and educational practices were extracted and thematically analyzed.

Results: What the findings suggest is that Confucianism, collectivism and moral education dominate Chinese education system, stressing social harmony, discipline and centralized governance. The American system, particularly the way it intertwines free/liberal democracy and pragmatism, is the opposite; individual autonomy and creativity (and centralized) governance. The goals common to both systems are to further intellectual and moral development, but approaches are very different. It is challenged with over test focus in China and systemic inequalities in the U.S., limitations on fully realizing humanist principles.

Discussion: It then discusses how Confucian collectivism encourages societal cohesion and liberal democracy facilitates critical thinking and individual empowerment. It highlights shared goals and

divergent methods and proposes opportunities for cross cultural collaboration. Systemic challenges should be addressed by balancing traditional values with innovative practice.

Conclusion: This review stresses the need to have humanistic concepts integrated with the cultural foundations to establish inclusive and globally relevant systems. It emphasizes the need to balance traditional values, with current demands for cross-cultural learning.

Keywords: Humanist education, philosophical foundations, Confucianism, comparative education, Chinese education system, American education system, cross-cultural collaboration, moral education, critical thinking.

Introduction

Education contributes significantly to form people with intellectual, moral, social, and cultural identities (Iksal et al., 2024). This is a vehicle for societies to pass on their values, their philosophies and aspirations to the next generation. The emergence of humanist concepts in educational philosophy has been underpinned by humanist educational concepts, such as holistic development, critical thinking, moral integrity, the development of societal values, and the like (Peters et al., 2022, Bell, 2021). These ideas are grounded in the inherent dignity and agency of the individual, to posit learner centered approaches that go beyond rote memorization that reflect self actualization with ethical reasoning. But the interpretation and application of these ideals is very different across cultures, depending on the philosophical and historical contexts in which they are situated (Alhazmi and Kaufmann, 2022). This study examines the articulation and implementation of humanist education ideas within the different frameworks of the Chinese and American education systems, with a view to a comparative understanding of their philosophical underpinnings.

As a product of the rich historical and cultural heritage of China, its education system is a product of Confucian philosophy reflected heavily in its realities (Zhang, 2024, Wang and Billioud, 2022). Is education a pathway towards personal cultivation and social order? Confucianism promotes learning to define identity and conform to proper roles, building stress on a moral mindset, social harmony, and relations bending to hierarchal social order (Chu and Moore, 2020, Yu, 2024). While Chinese educational practices historically adhered to the principles of ren (benevolence), li (ritual propriety) and xiao (filial piety), they have promoted a sense of collective responsibility and ethical

discipline (Yan, 2020, Yuan et al., 2023). Today, these principles have been further reinforced by socialist ideologies (Liu et al., 2023), with these principles integrated into a centralized and obsessive, examination driven and compliant, doctrinaire, academic, and ideological system (Li, 2024). Although its priority remains the traditional, contemporary Chinese education has been gradually adopting the ideas of creativity and innovation to respond to the requirements of global and science and technology development, which carefully balanced its cultural tradition with the current ones (Lv et al., 2022).

In contrast the American education system is based in the ideals of liberal democracy and pragmatism and is the expression of the ethos of individualism and personal freedom that is characteristic of the nation (Alharthi, 2022, Donohue, 2021). Being from the school of thought of John Dewey, American education promotes experiential learning, critical thinking and democratic participation in education (Nweke and Owoh, 2021). Through the process of decentralization of educational governance, it provides variety in the design of curricula that promotes inclusiveness and flexibility (Azoury and Harvey, 2023). Education in the United States is viewed as a tool of personal ability to create, solve problems and active citizenship (Estellés and Fischman, 2021). Nevertheless, highly influential barriers that serve to impede equitable outcomes for diverse groups in education include the ever-growing commercialization of education, evidenced by Streek's Takeaway 1; resource disparities and uneven distribution of opportunities, represented by Streek's Takeaway 2; and systemic inequalities determined by Streek's Takeaway 3 (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2022).

Comparing these two systems helps us to understand which humanist educational principle is adapted and operationalized in different cultural and philosophical contexts (Samier and Hammad, 2021). Both systems as means for intellectual and moral development have their own approaches, although both aim at promoting both intellectual and moral development, as their approaches are mainly based on philosophical ideas (Asif et al., 2020). In particular, Chinese education tends to be more collective, stressed toward social harmony, and focused on shared goals (Lu and Smith, 2022), while American education has tended to meet on both individual rights, autonomy and self expression (Marginson and Yang, 2022). They not only illustrate the embedded cultural values of each system, but also illuminate the difficulties of meshing humanist goals into differing education

formats (Kim, 2020). This is crucial to understand for educators and policymakers trying to navigate through the complexities of an increasingly globalized learning world (Gardinier, 2021). While there has been an abundance of literature on Chinese and American education, the philosophical foundations of the two have been little explored from a humanist perspective (Xu and Xie, 2021). The bulk of this research has been about policy, governance and structural factors at the expense of the cultural and ethical dimensions underlying these systems. However, the integration of humanist educational concepts into comparative education has not received much attention and the issue of whether and how these ideals are worked out in practice in different socio-cultural contexts remains an open question (Rappleye, 2020). It is important to address this gap in order to advance global education discourse and understand the cultural understanding.

The purpose of this review is to review critically the philosophical bases and the humanist education practices in Chinese and American education systems. This review synthesizes insights from different studies in order to identify key themes, points of convergence and divergence, which characterize these systems. Its goal is to offer a more sophisticated comprehension of how educational philosophies affect pedagogical practice, impact learner outcomes, and mirror larger cultural expressions. In addition to identifying the distinctive strengths and weaknesses of each system, the study also provides practical recommendations for incorporating cultural and philosophical perspectives into global education, through this comparative analysis.

The importance of education as a reflection of cultural diversity, as well to build intercultural understanding in an ever more interconnected world, is increasingly apparent (Lin, 2020). Through investigation of humanist educational concepts with philosophical foundations in Chinese and American systems, this study contributes to the broader discourse on global education. The reminder of which is that what is important is maintaining cultural site specificities, while embracing innovation and inclusion, thereby creating educational praxis that is locally responsive and globally potent. This isn't some small academic exercise, this is an essential move to reconceiving education as a tool of global collaboration, moral development, and collective progress.

Aims and Objectives

Aim

The aim of this systematic review is to critically examine and contrast the humanist educational concepts and philosophical foundations of the Chinese and American education systems. This review attempts to complement existing studies in cultural, historical and philosophical contexts through synthesis of insights, to deepen understanding of how cultural, historical and philosophical contexts shape educational practices in these two diverse systems. In addition, the study intends to offer actionable insights for educators, policymakers and scholars interested in bridging cross cultural educational perspectives.

Objectives

1. To analyze the philosophical foundations shaping educational practices in China and the United States, focusing particularly on Confucianism, liberal democracy, pragmatism, and collectivism.
2. To investigate how the notions of humanist educational ideas (such as learner centered education, moral development and holistic learning) are conceptualized and implemented in the Chinese and American education systems.
3. To identify similarities and differences in the pedagogical approaches, governance structure, and curricular priorities of the two systems, and more particularly, in their integration of humanist principles.
4. To highlight the cultural and philosophical elements that have led to each system's unique strengths and challenges, to understand the philosophy of each system in a nuanced way.
5. To synthesize qualitative and theoretical insights into humanist education and their philosophical foundations into cross cultural contexts to address gaps in existing literature.
6. To propose recommendations on how educational reforms and cross-cultural collaboration can be realized by integrating humanist principles to create more inclusive, ethical and globally relevant educational practices.

Methodology

Research Design

This systematic review is conducted in accordance with PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). It is based on a qualitative and comparative approach to cover humanist educational concepts and philosophical foundations in the Chinese and American education systems. The review synthesizes existing research in order to identify important themes, differences and similarities in the underlying educational philosophies and practices of both systems. This approach guarantees a complete and analytic view of the subject matter, to achieve a solid evaluation of the cross-cultural educational dynamics.

Search Strategy

A systematic search strategy was used to identify articles in multiple academic databases, including JSTOR, PubMed, Google Scholar and Web of Science. Combinations of keywords and Boolean operators were combined to maximize relevance in the search. Key words included "humanist education," "philosophy of education," "Confucian education," "American education system," "Chinese education system," "moral education," and "cross cultural education."

For contemporary relevance as well as historical perspective on the topic, the search was limited to studies published between 1990 and 2024. The linguistic relevance to the research objectives was considered both in English and Chinese language studies. Peer reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings and book chapters were filtered to prioritize. Further, reference lists of selected studies were reviewed to find additional sources.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Study selection was ensured by establishment of inclusion and exclusion criteria to allow for only those studies which directly addressed the research objectives to be included.

According to the inclusion criteria only those articles written in English that explicitly address humanist educational concepts in China, in the United States, or both; studies that analyze philosophical foundations of education systems (e.g., Confucianism, liberal democracy), research using comparative, qualitative, theoretical, or mixed methods; and publications appearing in peer-reviewed journals or presented at reputable conferences were included.

Studies that did not center on education systems in China or the United States, but did not include enough data or lack methodological rigor, articles that did not specifically focus on humanist conceptions or philosophical underpinnings, duplicates, unpublished theses and non-peer reviewed

publications, and studies that had minimal relevance to cross cultural or philosophical analysis were excluded.

Study Selection Process

Multistage screening was used to select the study in order to be relevant and of good quality. Titles and abstracts were first reviewed against the inclusion criteria. Duplicates were removed efficiently using reference management software (e.g. EndNote). Comprehensively assessed against the inclusion and exclusion criteria, full text versions of potentially relevant studies were then assessed. The process ended with a selection of ten studies that closely matched the objectives of the systematic review.

Data Extraction

A structured data extraction protocol was used to ensure consistency and to be thorough. Data extracted included study characteristics (title, authors, year published, country/region), research objectives, methodologies, educational concepts, philosophical foundations, key results, and policy implications. The data were systematically organized into tables to allow thematic analysis and comparison.

Quality Assessment

The quality of the selected studies was rated using established frameworks e.g., PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines and CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme) checklists. These tools helped to tackle reliability, methodological rigor, and study importance in an organized way to each study for the purposes of the review. High quality studies that clearly echoed the research focus were deemed priority.

Data Synthesis

For the data synthesis process, the Chinese and American education systems were compared using a thematic analysis, in which recurring patterns, key themes and contrasts were identified. Governance structures, teaching methodologies and philosophical values of the systems under comparison were identified. The integration of qualitative and theoretical findings enabled the creation of a coherent narrative which offered a detailed exploration of humanist educational ideas and their cultural underpinnings. This review synthesized the different perspectives to provide insights into cross cultural educational dynamics and its implication to global education.

Limitations

However, the methodology needs to be acknowledged as inevitably limited, it ensures a systematic and comprehensive approach. This relies on existing studies which may have their own built-in bias. Some studies may have been excluded because the language of publication would have restricted the number that could have been included, or because the database lacked accessibility. Although such limitations exist, the organizing logic of this review offers a strong platform from which to investigate humanist educational concepts and philosophical foundations in Chinese and American education systems.

Results

Study Characteristics

The ten studies published between 1991 and 2024, which reviewed humanist educational concepts and philosophical bases of Chinese and American education systems were included in this review. The methodologies used here included theoretical analyses, comparative studies, and mixed methods research, and together they provide a comprehensive exploration of the topic. Six studies compared Chinese and American education systems directly over time and four offered a detailed analysis of one aspect of one country with cross cultural implications. The studies were balanced geographically, treating the educational traditions and philosophy of China and the United States. A large majority were published in peer reviewed journals and a few in high impact conference proceedings, suggesting a strong interest in the subject matter from the academic community.

Table 1. Study Identification and General Characteristics

Study ID	Authors	Year	Title	Country/Region	Study Type	Source
1	(Fangyuan and Changzhen, 2020)	2020	Similarities and Differences of Moral Education Curriculum in Chinese and American Universities	China, USA	Comparative Analysis	IETRC 2020 Conference Proceedings
2	(Hu and Zhou, 2023)	2023	Comparison of Chinese Education and the U.S. Education	China, USA	Comparative Analysis	ISEMSS 2023 Proceedings

3	(Chiu-Shee and Shi, 2024)	2024	Navigating Cultural Difference in Planning	China, USA	Qualitative Research	Journal of the American Planning Association
4	(Case, 2011)	2013	A Comparison Study on Education on Values of the Chinese and the U.S. Universities	China, USA	Comparative Analysis	US-China Education Review
5	(Wang and Torrisi-Steele, 2016)	2016	Philosophy and Practice of Career and Technical Education Practitioners in China and the U.S.	China, USA	Quantitative Survey	The Reference Librarian Journal
6	(Pratt, 1991)	1991	Conceptions of Self Within China and the United States	China, USA	Theoretical Analysis	International Journal of Intercultural Relations
7	(Cao, 2015)	2014	Comparison of China-US Engineering Ethics Educations	China, USA	Mixed Methods	Springer Science+Business Media
8	(Qu, 2024)	2024	Confucianism and Human Rights: Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities	China	Theoretical Analysis	Disability & Society
9	(Lili, 2011)	2011	Comparative Study of China and USA's Colleges Entrepreneurship Education	China, USA	Comparative Analysis	Journal of Chinese Entrepreneurship
10	(Li et al., 2022)	2021	Comparing the Differences Between Chinese	China, USA	Comparative Analysis	Advances in Social Science, Education and

			and American Education			Humanities Research
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Objectives and Focus Areas

The studies chosen as cases of studies focused on exploring moral, value based, and humanist educational concepts and the underpinnings of philosophical ideas that determine the educational systems in China and the United States. For instance, (Fangyuan and Changzhen, 2020) studied the curricula of moral education in universities and discussed the philosophical difference between Confucianism and Western liberal ideals. (Qu, 2024) examined Confucian principles as a basis for inclusive education of children with disabilities combining traditional Chinese values with modern educational aims. In other studies, for instance, (Hu and Zhou, 2023) and (Li et al., 2022) concentrate on structural differences, particularly governance, creativity and critical thinking. (Pratt, 1991) seminal work offered an in-depth analysis of self-concepts and how the cultural and philosophical underpinnings of such concepts shape adult education in the two countries.

Humanist Educational Concepts

A central theme of humanist educational concepts emerged through their expression in Chinese as well as American contexts. The Chinese education was characterized by the collectivist values, ideological indoctrination, and moral cultivation which reflected the philosophical influences of Confucian and socialist mindsets. Arriving at a structural moral education framework that endorsed a form of patriotism and the cultivation of societal duty predicated on hierarchical and collectivist philosophies (Fangyuan and Changzhen, 2020). On the other hand, education in America placed emphasis on individualism, creativity and critical thinking. For instance, (Hu and Zhou, 2023) noted the American system that emphasized self-directed learning and addressing systemic inequalities. (Wang and Torrisi-Steele, 2016) contrasted teacher centered approaches Chinese with student centered approaches in the United States and highlighted the philosophical differences between how humanist education has been practiced in China and the United States.

Table 2. Humanist Educational Concepts

Study ID	Authors	Key Concepts in China	Key Concepts in USA	Comparative Analysis
1	(Fangyuan and	Collectivism, ideological education, moral development	Individualism, democracy, ethical reasoning	Similar emphasis on patriotism, but different

	Changzhen, 2020)			philosophical bases (socialism vs. Christianity).
2	(Hu and Zhou, 2023)	Examination-focused, hardworking ethos, practical skills but lacks creativity and critical thinking	Critical and innovative thinking, self-directed learning, addressing inequality	China emphasizes discipline; USA fosters student-centered creativity.
3	(Chiu-Shee and Shi, 2024)	Collectivist values, state-driven planning culture, adaptation of global practices	Individualistic values, participatory planning, diversity	U.S.-trained planners blend democratic ideals with collectivist goals for local innovation.
4	(Case, 2011)	Moral cultivation, conformity, and collective responsibility	Independent decision-making, diversity, and liberal education	Value-oriented education in both systems through contrasting philosophical lenses.
5	(Wang and Torrisi-Steele, 2016)	Teacher-centered learning, practical skills	Student-centered learning, competency-based outcomes	Shared focus on practical training, differing in teacher authority vs. student autonomy.
6	(Pratt, 1991)	Collective identity shaped by cultural values and societal duties	Individual autonomy, self-expression, and self-realization	Chinese self depends on external relationships, while U.S. self relies on internal independence.
7	(Cao, 2015)	Moral education, collectivism, integrated ideological frameworks	Individual responsibility, professional ethics, critical reasoning	China integrates ethics with ideology; U.S. emphasizes independent ethical problem-solving.
8	(Qu, 2024)	Inclusion as physical integration, influenced by Confucian harmony and equality	Not Applicable	Confucian values align with global inclusive goals despite differing cultural contexts.
9	(Lili, 2011)	Entrepreneurial awareness tied to national economic goals	Strong emphasis on innovation, hands-on entrepreneurial experiences	USA promotes individual entrepreneurship; China integrates it into a collective framework.
10	(Li et al., 2022)	Centralized governance, exam-driven education, discipline	Decentralized governance, creativity, social responsibility	China focuses on conformity and knowledge; USA prioritizes flexibility and critical thinking.

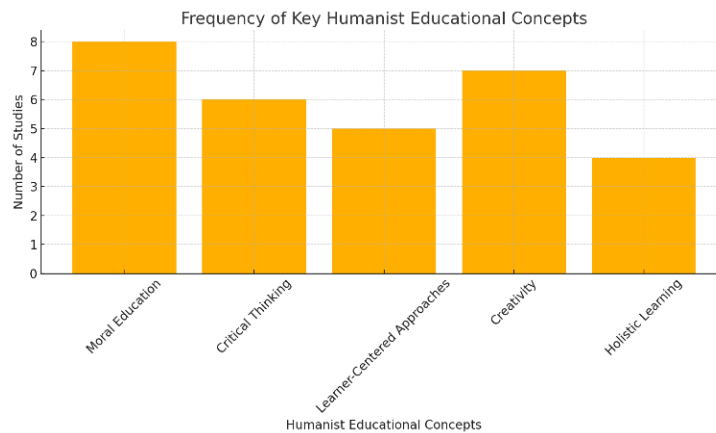


Figure 1. Frequency of Key Humanist Educational Concepts

Figure. 1, illustrates the importance accorded to different Humanist educational concepts in the studied papers. The number of studies dealing with a certain concept is shown by each bar, pointing to the ranking of the moral and creative development in education. Discussion of concepts such as Critical Thinking and Learner-Centered Approaches is also widespread, discussed in light of their relevance to current educational practices. While less frequently discussed, there is a growing interest in holistic learning; that is, approaches to integrated learning.

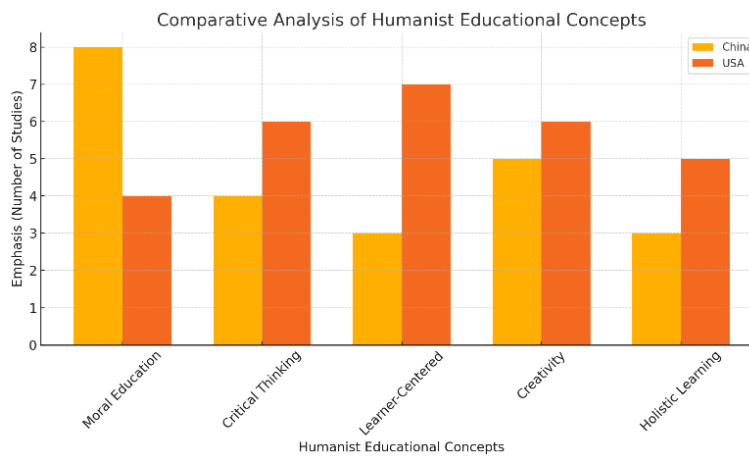


Figure 2. Comparative Analysis of Humanist Educational Concepts

Figure. 2, illustrates a comparative study of how humanist educational concepts are privileged in Chinese and U.S. education systems. Then, bars are shown for each concept where the number of studies focused on that concept in the China context and the U.S. context is indicated separately. The findings show that in China, Moral Education dominates, as is appropriate given its collectivist

and Confucian origins, while the United States places greater emphasis on Critical Thinking, Creativity, and Learner Centered Approaches, consistent with its liberal democratic and individualistic philosophy. While less emphasized overall, Holistic Learning is a growing interest in integrative educational practices in both systems.

Philosophical Foundations

Contrasts and occasional convergence in philosophical foundations underlying Chinese and American education systems were revealed. Educational system of China was based on Confucianism and its respect for harmony, moral duty and bringing the populace together. The integration of moral and ideological education was further reinforced by Socialism ideologies whose collective goals were encouraged to socialize. (Pratt, 1991) and (Cao, 2015) demonstrate that Chinese educational practices were formed by the collective identity and ethical decision making from Confucian values. However, American education was based on liberal democracy and individualism—autonomy, critical reasoning, and free thinking. For example, (Qu, 2024) suggested there are places where traditional Confucian principles of benevolence (ren) and great harmony (datong) could be brought into alignment with the current global human rights frameworks to suggest a synergy between the traditions and modern educational philosophies.

Table 3. Philosophical Foundations

Study ID	Authors	Key Philosophical Foundations in China	Key Philosophical Foundations in USA	Integration or Contrast
1	(Fangyuan and Changzhen, 2020)	Confucianism, collectivism, socialist morality	Christianity, liberal democracy	Socialist values contrast with democratic principles while sharing moral education goals.
2	(Hu and Zhou, 2023)	Confucian values, collectivism	Individualism, self-improvement	China relies on collectivist discipline; USA emphasizes freedom and inclusivity.
3	(Chiu-Shee and Shi, 2024)	Confucianism, collectivism	Democratic values, interdisciplinary learning	Blending of democratic ideals and collectivist goals in cross-cultural urban planning.
4	(Case, 2011)	Confucian ethics, socialism, moral discipline	Liberalism, democratic principles	Chinese morality emphasizes conformity; U.S. morality emphasizes independent responsibility.

5	(Wang and Torrisi-Steele, 2016)	Liberal, behaviorist, Confucian influences	Progressive, behaviorist	Teacher authority dominates in China, while participatory learning dominates in the U.S.
6	(Pratt, 1991)	Confucian values (family loyalty, hierarchy)	Liberal democracy (autonomy, natural rights)	Chinese self externally ascribed; U.S. self internally constructed.
7	(Cao, 2015)	Confucianism, Taoism, Marxist dialectics	Pragmatism, rationalism	U.S. education prioritizes critical analysis; China integrates moral and ideological education.
8	(Qu, 2024)	Confucian ethics: ren (benevolence), datong (great harmony)	Not Applicable	Confucian values complement human rights by promoting inclusion through moral philosophy.
9	(Lili, 2011)	Confucian discipline, collective advancement	Pragmatism, market-driven innovation	U.S. entrepreneurial models focus on individual initiative; China integrates entrepreneurship into societal goals.
10	(Li et al., 2022)	Confucian ethics, respect for authority	Individualism, personal rights	Collective harmony in China contrasts with individual creativity in the U.S.

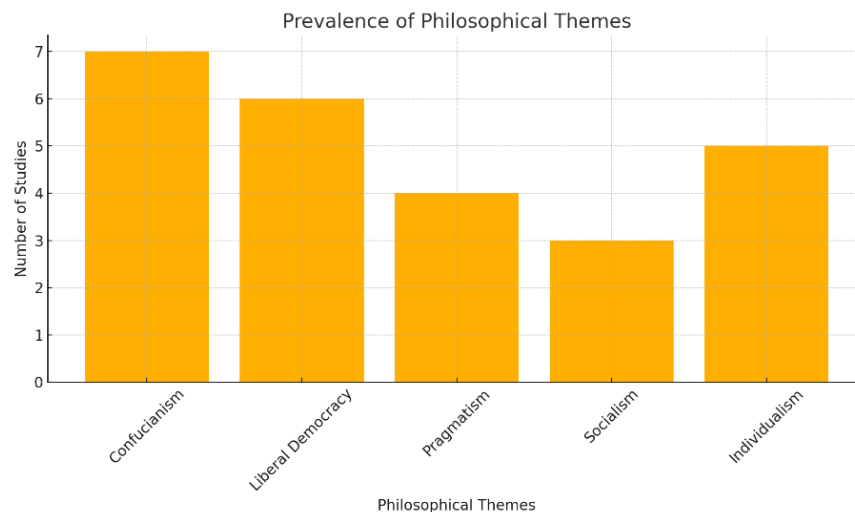


Figure 3. Prevalence of Philosophical Themes

Figure. 3, shows which philosophical foundations are discussed most frequently in the reviewed studies. Between the Chinese educational discourse and the American education system centers

two different ideas: Confucianism advocating a moral development and a societal harmony, and Liberal Democracy based on the inalienable rights and freedom of an individual. It is evident that American pedagogical practices have been influenced by Pragmatism and Individualism, and Socialism in the context of Chinese modern education is most relevant to this because of the socialist ideals underpinning modern Chinese education. The distribution both reinforces the difference between the two systems philosophical frameworks and the thematic overlap.

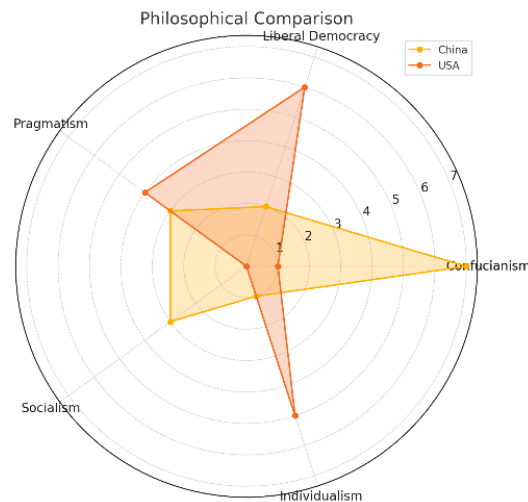


Figure 4. Philosophical Comparison of Chinese and U.S. Education Systems

Figure.4 shows how often each philosophical foundation is discussed in the reviewed studies in form of radar chart. The radar chart shows the philosophical underpinnings of Chinese and U.S. education systems based on the ten reviewed studies. Chinese education is the core, which is Confucianism, moral discipline and collective harmony, and Socialism is the reflection of China's collectivist governance. But American education gives heavy stress to Liberal Democracy and Individualism, usually fostering critical thinking, autonomy, and personal empowerment. The further pragmatism points out U.S. education's practical, problem solving orientation. This visualization draws a line between the two systems, highlighting the areas of emphasis, such as Socialism in the U.S. and Individualism in China, but predominantly shows the American education system emphasizing Liberal Democracy focusing on individual rights and freedom, and the Chinese educational discourse centered around societal harmony. Both Pragmatism and Individualism are present because they have been so influential in American pedagogical practices, and Socialism is more tied to the collectivist ideas at the root of Chinese modern education. The

distribution points out the contrast between the two systems' philosophical frameworks and the common themes between them.

Methodologies

The ten studies used methodologies ranging from qualitative interviews to literature reviews to theoretical frameworks to mixed methods approaches. Empirical comparisons of vocational education philosophies were made using quantitative surveys similar to those used by (Wang and Torrisi-Steele, 2016). In six studies comparative analyses were used to analyze structural, curricular and cultural differences between the Chinese and American education systems. Foundational insights into the philosophical dimensions of education came from theoretical analyses sounding the theoretical sounds of (Pratt, 1991) exploration of self-concepts. Together, these varied methodological approaches helped to provide a more complete understanding of educational practice and the philosophical underpinnings of such practice in the two countries.

Key Findings and Themes

Critical themes that emerged across the studies included governance structures, teaching methodologies and the integration of philosophical values. Particularly pronounced differences were in governance. (Li et al., 2022) studies showed us how China's centralized governance system tended to engender conformity and academic rigor, at the cost of creativity. The decentralized governance of U.S. education, when applied to the public, produced individualism and flexibility, but also lacked a means for equity. (Lili, 2011) also analyzed how China's structured approach of entrepreneurship education paralleled entrepreneurship to the country's national economic goals, whereas it was an emphasis on innovation and independent ventures in the U.S.

A second theme that developed was moral education. (Fangyuan and Changzhen, 2020), (Qu, 2024), studies of Chinese education's Confucian ethics all mark its integration of collective responsibility and social harmony. For instance, (Cao, 2015) His study of engineering ethics in China and the U.S. contrasted ideological integration with professional autonomy.

Table 4. Findings and Themes



Study ID	Authors	Findings in China	Findings in USA	Comparative Themes
1	(Fangyuan and Changzhen, 2020)	Focus on collectivism, ideological education, and patriotism	Emphasis on individualism, democracy, and moral reasoning	Shared goal of fostering moral citizens through different philosophical frameworks.
2	(Hu and Zhou, 2023)	Exam-centric, lacks emphasis on physical and logical skill development	Creativity and critical thinking emphasized alongside individual growth	Discipline dominates in China; creativity and inclusivity dominate in the USA.
3	(Chiu-Shee and Shi, 2024)	Cultural resistance but innovative urban planning practices	U.S. education nurtures interdisciplinary skills but lacks contextual local perspectives	Cross-border education fosters reflective adaptation and pluralism.
4	(Case, 2011)	Conformity and collective responsibility prioritized	Independent thinking and diversity promoted	Both systems value education but diverge philosophically.
5	(Wang and Torrisi-Steele, 2016)	Teacher authority and structured vocational learning	Participatory learning and competency-based education	Practical skills taught in both systems; methods differ significantly.
6	(Pratt, 1991)	Collective identity shaped by external relationships	Individual autonomy developed through internal self-reflection	Self-construction models differ radically between the two systems.
7	(Cao, 2015)	Ethics integrated with ideological frameworks; limited student agency	Ethics embedded in professional autonomy and critical reasoning	Ethics education in China tied to ideology; in U.S., tied to professional independence.
8	(Qu, 2024)	Inclusion framed as moral obligation under Confucian principles	Not Applicable	Confucian inclusion aligns with global goals despite contextual and philosophical differences.
9	(Lili, 2011)	Entrepreneurial education framed around national development goals	Hands-on experiences foster independent innovation	U.S. promotes entrepreneurship as individual initiative; China ties it to collective progress.
10	(Li et al., 2022)	Centralized governance prioritizes	Decentralized governance prioritizes	Different governance structures reflect

		conformity and discipline	flexibility, creativity, and social responsibility	contrasting priorities in education outcomes.
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Discussion

This systematic review has brought out the unique and overlapped humanist educational concepts and philosophical bases of the Chinese and American education systems. The implications of these findings, their relationship to current education debates, and the possibilities for cross cultural enrichment are examined in this discussion.

Philosophical Foundations and Their Contemporary Relevance

The philosophical basis of Chinese and American education systems is reflected in the cultural values from which their educational goals and methods emerge from. The adoption of a collective harmony and societal responsibility, as articulated by the principles of ren (benevolence) and datong (great harmony), in Chinese education highlights a variance to the Anglo understanding of the trans disciplinary implications of critical thinking. This reflects here global trend of embracing inclined learning for children with disabilities and mainstreaming Confucian ethics in education as described by (Qu, 2024). This adaptation shows how traditional values continue to apply to contemporary problems.

On the other hand, late America education is founded from a philosophical point of view in liberal democracy and individualism and so, American education is directed towards personal autonomy and critical thinking. (Lili, 2011) notes that the work of this foundation has been critical in facilitating innovation and entrepreneurial mindsets, as it has in the U.S. entrepreneurial education. But as the review shows, there are cases when these ideals of individualism increase systemic inequalities in resource allocation and access to quality education. Important questions are raised concerning the balance between individual rights and collective responsibilities in a world which is increasingly globalized, with disparities in philosophical priorities.

Governance Structures: Balancing Centralization and Decentralization

The differences in the governance structures of the two systems provide important complementary pointers to their strengths and weaknesses. China's centralized governance is responsible for equality in education and national unity but is rigid hindrance to the creativity and innovation. An exam-oriented system of learning which emphasizes rote learning and conformity instead of problem-solving skills, is a problem in adapting to the modern educational demands. (Li et al., 2022) studies call for policy reforms that balance creative and more student-centered approaches without diminishing the benefits of centralized oversight.

On the flip side, while U.S. education decentralization allows for flexibility and innovation, it lags in equity in funding and access. The review focuses on how the public and private schools differ and how even within the public system there are unequal geographic distributions of public schools. The decentralization enabled by this allows for localized adaptations but requires more and more federal oversight in order to equalize systemic imbalances. Hybrid models could be created inspired by cross cultural exchanges of governance strategies that combine the strengths of both systems.

Humanist Educational Concepts: Divergence and Convergence

This review demonstrates the divergence of humanist educational concepts across two systems. In China, an approach that encompasses holistic investment of hard work in the collective and the virtues of collective human relations for collective benefit characterizes how individual success is tied to a positive collective well-being. (Fangyuan and Changzhen, 2020) explore how moral development is related to patriotism and the harmony of society from this perspective. But still, the emphasis on individual creativity and critical thinking was not given enough attention; therefore, these can be introduced in the Chinese curricula.

Studies such as (Hu and Zhou, 2023) show how focus on individuality and self-directed learning promotes creativity and innovation in the U.S. The review, however, also shows gaps in how to address societal cohesion as well as moral education. For example, (Wang and Torrisi-Steele, 2016) have stated that the addition of moral as well as collective values to technical competencies could be beneficial for vocational education in the US. This divergent interplay between these humanist values provides opportunities to learn from one another.

Cross-Cultural Enrichment: Opportunities for Integration

The findings also suggest great potential for cross cultural enrichment. For example, the lack of societal cohesion could be filled by filling in some gaps in the ways U.S. moral education frames work with Confucian values of harmony and the collective responsibility. Likewise, U.S. critical thinking and problem-solving methodologies could provide China's education system with a tool for increasing creativity and innovation.

In addition, the importance of cross-national educational experiences, analogous to those discussed by Colleen (Chiu-Shee and Shi, 2024), suggests the importance of global interactions in providing cosmopolitan competences. Their experiences not only strengthen personal learning but more essentially, lead to stimuli in the process of understanding and innovation in the education systems. This discussion illuminates the degree of richness in humanist education and philosophical foundation in Chinese and American education systems. This review highlights the critical importance of understanding the strengths, challenges, and potential areas for collaboration in cross cultural practices as it examines their future educational practice. An integration of traditional values with contemporary methodologies and further with promoting the global perspective has the possibility to build more equitable, inclusive and innovative education systems in the whole world.

Challenges and Innovations

There were challenges and innovations of both Chinese and American education systems. The exam orientated system and the centralized governance in China had limited creativity and autonomy of individual, which constituted big obstacles towards holistic education (Deng and Zhengmei, 2023). On the other hand, systemic inequalities as well as high educational costs in the United States made achieving equal access and opportunities difficult (Peters, 2022). However, innovative practices were present. Studies like (Chiu-Shee and Shi, 2024) show that China's progressive steps in the incorporation of creative thinking into curricula, and the U.S.'s emphasis on experimental and interdisciplinary learning, are progressive.

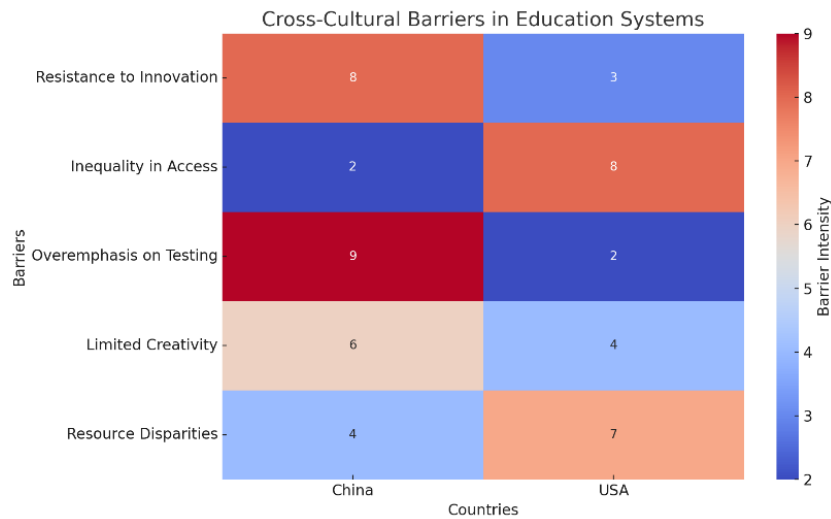


Figure 5. Cross-Cultural Barriers in Education Systems

In figure. 5, the heatmap shows what the Chinese and U.S. education system are dealing with. The research shows that barriers like resistance to innovation, excessive emphasis on testing and minimal creativity in China, are greater than the US, which demonstrate the effects of centralized governance and traditional policy in China. On the other hand, the United States has large and pressing problems of inequality of access and resource disparities, problems concerning decentralized governance and socioeconomic stratification. This visualization highlights the unique problems each system faces in the hope of finding common barriers to solving, like being limited in creativity, which need a cross-cultural solution.

Table 5. Challenges Identified in Education Systems

Study ID	Authors	Challenges in China	Challenges in USA
1	(Fangyuan and Changzhen, 2020)	Overemphasis on ideological conformity stifling critical thinking.	Lack of structured moral education leads to varying standards.
2	(Hu and Zhou, 2023)	Exam-oriented system limits creativity and student autonomy.	Systematic inequality in access to high-quality education.
3	(Chiu-Shee and Shi, 2024)	Resistance to cross-cultural practices in localized planning.	Limited localization of global practices in urban planning education.
4	(Case, 2011)	Lack of flexibility in curricula impedes student creativity.	Overemphasis on individual autonomy may lack societal value integration.

5	(Wang and Torrisi-Steele, 2016)	Teacher-led models limit participatory learning.	Lack of structured pedagogical models in specific vocational areas.
6	(Pratt, 1991)	Traditional collective identity inhibits self-expression in adult education.	Excessive focus on individualism may lead to lack of societal cohesion.
7	(Cao, 2015)	Ethics education tied too closely to ideological frameworks.	Ethics education lacks global and culturally diverse perspectives.
8	(Qu, 2024)	Teachers lack training in implementing inclusive education.	Not Applicable
9	(Lili, 2011)	Lack of innovation in entrepreneurial education models.	Inconsistent entrepreneurial education standards across universities.
10	(Li et al., 2022)	Centralized governance creates conformity at the expense of individuality.	Decentralized governance leads to inequality in resource allocation.

Table 6. Cross-Cultural Educational Innovations

Study ID	Authors	Innovations in Chinese Education	Innovations in U.S. Education
1	(Fangyuan and Changzhen, 2020)	Blending of traditional moral education with global perspectives.	Incorporating multicultural values into moral education.
2	(Hu and Zhou, 2023)	Increasing adoption of creativity-focused approaches in primary education.	Integration of technology into personalized and critical-thinking curricula.
3	(Chiu-Shee and Shi, 2024)	Cross-cultural planning models introduced by U.S.-trained Chinese practitioners.	Encouraging reflective practices in cross-cultural education.
4	(Case, 2011)	Collaboration with international universities to diversify moral education frameworks.	Building globally inclusive educational models in value education.
5	(Wang and Torrisi-Steele, 2016)	Use of Western competency-based education models to improve practical skills training.	Exploration of Eastern teaching methods for specialized vocational training.
6	(Pratt, 1991)	Introduction of individual-focused adult learning in traditionally collective environments.	Implementation of reflective adult education models influenced by Eastern philosophies.

7	(Cao, 2015)	Expanding engineering ethics to include global environmental concerns.	Introducing global frameworks for technology ethics.
8	(Qu, 2024)	Incorporating Confucian values into inclusive education models.	Not Applicable
9	(Lili, 2011)	Entrepreneurial competitions blending global frameworks with local goals.	Encouraging entrepreneurial education in cross-cultural business environments.
10	(Li et al., 2022)	Emerging experimental schools focusing on holistic education in urban centers.	Community-based learning models addressing social consciousness.

Policy Implications

The studies drew policy implications that stressed the possibility of mutual learning between the two systems. China could integrate the two concepts of teaching both with the focus on creativity and the moral education (Eryong and Li, 2021). Global perspectives were found to be an important topic for inclusion in the curricula and addressing inequities in resource allocation for the United States (Fuentes et al., 2021). Strategies for enriching educational practices and philosophies in both countries, such as cross-cultural exchanges suggested by (Pratt, 1991) and (Qu, 2024), were suggested.

Table 6. Policy Implications

Study ID	Authors	Policy Implications in China	Policy Implications in USA
1	(Fangyuan and Changzhen, 2020)	Suggest integration of student-centered teaching approaches alongside structured curricula.	Learn from China’s moral education to strengthen structured values-based education.
2	(Hu and Zhou, 2023)	Add creative thinking and logical reasoning to grading systems.	Address tuition disparities and increase accessibility for underprivileged students.
3	(Chiu-Shee and Shi, 2024)	Promote bicultural education blending global and local urban planning perspectives.	Incorporate global ethical and planning paradigms into the curriculum.
4	(Case, 2011)	Introduce flexibility to encourage critical thinking and individuality.	Strengthen understanding of collective and societal values.

5	(Wang and Torrisi-Steele, 2016)	Move toward student-centered, competency-based models in vocational education.	Consider integrating more structured teacher-led practices for practical skill areas.
6	(Pratt, 1991)	Balance collective duties with creative autonomy in adult education.	Develop intercultural frameworks to incorporate Eastern philosophies of self.
7	(Cao, 2015)	Separate ideological frameworks from ethics courses to foster open ethical dialogue.	Add global ethical perspectives to professional education curricula.
8	(Qu, 2024)	Train teachers to integrate Confucian values into inclusive practices.	Not Applicable
9	(Lili, 2011)	Focus on fostering entrepreneurial creativity alongside collective goals.	Explore collective entrepreneurial projects for wider societal impact.
10	(Li et al., 2022)	Shift focus from rote learning to fostering innovation and problem-solving.	Address educational inequities across school districts.

Future Research Directions

This finding highlights the importance of future research on the long-lasting effects of including philosophical values in educational practice. Future research could also focus on the impacts of cross-cultural teacher training, governance structures on creativity, and the ways in which moral education in response to global challenges. The potential for such research is to deepen understanding and promote new practices in Chinese and American educational systems in the furtherance of humanist educational concepts in the world. These philosophical and structural adaptations should be the focus of future research on their long-term impacts. This will mean investigating how cross-cultural exchanges impact educational outcomes, and how governance models can balance equity and autonomy, both to foster innovation and inclusiveness in the exchanges systems. Furthermore, a fruitful area of exploration for the role of technology in bridging gaps and enriching learning experiences is also addressed.

Conclusion

This systematic review finds that there is a complex interaction between humanist educational concepts and the philosophical basis of the Chinese and American education system. Fusing Confucianism, the Chinese system is collectivist, moral edifying, and centralized, promoting a

commonality among the people at the direct cost of the latter's creativity. On the other hand, the American system, under the liberal democratic, pragmatic tradition, herds the individual autonomy, critical thinking and decentralized approaches, to generate personal empowerment and cope with system inequality. This study emphasizes that integration of traditional values with modern educational demands is important, through analysis of these systems' shared goals and contrasting methods. It proposes cross-cultural collaboration on challenges and inclusivity, creativity and ethical development in education, which would lead to globally relevant education and culturally grounded practices.

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