

Cultural Integration in Global Education Governance: Theoretical Logic, Practical Paths and Optimization Strategies

Chen Chen^{1, 2, *}

¹ Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Nanjing, 210016, China

² Jiangsu Education Association for International Exchange, Nanjing, 210024, China

* Corresponding Author Email: 472112895@qq.com

Abstract. Global education governance is undergoing a transformation from "Western-centrism" to "pluralistic co-governance". As a core path to address governance imbalance and promote mutual learning among civilizations, cultural integration has become increasingly prominent in value. Based on symbiosis theory and the inclusive principle of global governance, this paper defines the core connotation of cultural integration as "two-way embedding, value coexistence, and benefit sharing". Through practical cases in multiple fields such as vocational education internationalization, international Chinese education, and basic education cultural exchanges, it analyzes the implementation paths of cultural integration in curriculum restructuring, teacher collaboration, and mechanism innovation. The paper also reveals the current practical challenges including cultural adaptation imbalance, digital divide constraints, and standard mutual recognition barriers. Finally, it proposes optimization strategies from three dimensions: conceptual innovation, mechanism construction, and technological empowerment, aiming to provide theoretical support and practical reference for building a more equitable and inclusive global education governance system.

Keywords: Global education governance; Cultural integration; Mutual learning among civilizations; Vocational education internationalization; Educational equity.

1. Introduction

With the widespread dissemination of the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind and the profound transformation of the global governance system, global education governance is shifting from a single standard output to pluralistic civilization dialogue. For a long time, the Western-dominated governance model has been entrenched with a "center-periphery" logic, which fails to reflect the diversity of world civilizations, leading to structural contradictions such as uneven distribution of educational resources and cultural identity fragmentation. Against this backdrop, cultural integration, as a key path transcending one-way cultural output and realizing the coexistence of diverse civilizations, has become a core issue in the transformation of global education governance.

Cultural integration is not a simple cultural superposition, but a process of two-way adaptation and embedded coexistence of different civilizations in terms of values, practical models, and institutional norms, with education as the carrier. From the paradigm shift of international Chinese education to the localized practice of vocational education "going global", from youth cross-cultural exchanges to multilateral education standard co-construction, cultural integration has permeated all fields and links of global education governance. The "technology + culture" dual-drive model of Jiangsu Zheng He College and the immersive exchange practice of China-Canada youth exchange programs have both confirmed the core value of cultural integration in improving educational governance efficiency and enhancing people-to-people bonds. Based on the practical needs of global education governance, this paper systematically sorts out the theoretical logic and practical paths of cultural integration, providing new ideas for addressing governance dilemmas and building a pluralistic co-governance system.

2. Theoretical Logic and Core Connotation of Cultural Integration in Global Education Governance

2.1. Theoretical Support: Symbiosis Theory and Inclusive Governance Principle

Symbiosis theory provides a methodological foundation for cultural integration. Symbiosis theory emphasizes the interdependence and coordinated evolution of different subjects in an ecosystem, opposing one-way dominant relationships. In global education governance, this theory requires breaking the monopoly of "Western standards" and building a symbiotic relationship between "local culture and foreign experience", enabling educational practice to take root in local cultural soil while absorbing the outstanding achievements of human civilization. The paradigm shift of international Chinese education from "cultural output" to "mutual learning among civilizations" is a vivid practice of symbiosis theory, whose core lies in building a dialogue bridge through language education to realize the value coexistence of different civilizations.

The inclusive governance principle defines the value orientation of cultural integration. The inclusive principle of global governance emphasizes respecting differences, ensuring participation, and achieving win-win results, which is highly consistent with the core demands of cultural integration. In education governance, inclusiveness is reflected in respecting the cultural traditions and educational sovereignty of various countries, and through multi-stakeholder collaborative decision-making, making educational policies, curriculum systems, and evaluation standards meet both global common needs and local specific contexts. The "common standards + local rules" model implemented in the internationalization of Jiangsu's vocational education is a specific manifestation of the inclusive principle.

2.2. Core Connotation: Three-Dimensional Characteristics of Cultural Integration

Value dimension: From "one-way output" to "two-way mutual learning". Cultural integration abandons the "theory of civilizational superiority" and advocates mutual understanding and nourishment among different cultures through equal dialogue. The practice of international Chinese education has shown that only by deeply integrating Chinese education with the social structure and cultural traditions of target countries can we form mutually supportive and win-win organic connections, rather than mere language dissemination.

Practical dimension: From "simple transplantation" to "in-depth embedding". Cultural integration requires educational practice to break away from the dilemma of "acclimatization" and achieve in-depth adaptation to local cultural contexts. Measures such as curriculum restructuring and flexible management in the internationalization of vocational education essentially embed technical standards with local cultural scenarios, industrial needs, and social customs, enabling educational achievements to truly serve local development.

Goal dimension: From "exclusive benefit" to "shared benefit". The ultimate goal of cultural integration is to build a global education governance community and realize educational equity and common development. Through technology transfer, talent training, and standard co-construction, various countries, especially developing countries, can equally share the achievements of educational development, contributing to the realization of the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

3. Practical Paths of Cultural Integration in Global Education Governance

3.1. Vocational Education Internationalization: Dual Helix Integration of Technology and Culture

As an important carrier of global education governance, the cultural integration practice in the process of vocational education "going global" is typical. Brand projects such as Jiangsu Zheng He College and Luban Workshops have explored a dual helix integration path of "technical standards + local culture".

Dual cultural coding of curriculum systems. Breaking the model of "overseas transplantation of domestic courses", a modular curriculum of "technical core + cultural scenarios" has been constructed. In the e-commerce major teaching of Zheng He College in Semarang, Indonesia, Jiangsu Vocational Institute of Commerce retains core technical frameworks such as data analysis and supply chain management, while replacing domestic platform cases with TikTok Shop operation cases and integrating Indonesian religious festival marketing strategies, shortening the students' post adaptation period from 3 months to 1 month. This restructuring is not a simple case replacement, but a cultural reconstruction of technical application scenarios, achieving precise alignment between technical standards and local needs.

Cross-cultural collaboration of teacher teams. Adopting a mixed teaching model of "Chinese technical teachers + local cultural teachers" to build an intermediary bridge for cultural integration. In the cooperative project in Ethiopia, Changzhou Vocational Institute of Mechatronic Technology assigns Chinese teachers to be responsible for core technical teaching, while local teachers take on the roles of language translation and cultural interpretation. The two parties have jointly developed 5 bilingual textbooks, increasing student satisfaction from 68% to 91%. Through the "joint teacher training" mechanism, a "non-departing" teaching force that masters professional skills and understands local culture has been cultivated, providing talent support for cultural integration.

Localized adaptation of management mechanisms. Respecting the non-negotiable elements of local culture and realizing flexible adjustment of management rules. In response to the religious and cultural characteristics of Africa, Zheng He College has adjusted the "Chinese-style attendance" to a flexible check-in system, allowing students to arrange their study time flexibly for prayers, reducing the absence rate from 25% to 8%. In the Pakistan project, a flexible internship program has been designed for female students to resolve the conflict between the "three-shift system" of Chinese-funded enterprises and family responsibilities, increasing the female employment rate from 12% to 35%.

3.2. International Chinese Education: From Language Dissemination to Mutual Learning Among Civilizations

As an important carrier of cultural integration, international Chinese education is undergoing a paradigm shift from "single language teaching" to "a platform for mutual learning among civilizations". The core of this transformation lies in building a three-dimensional integration model of "language + culture + governance".

Value orientation transformation: From "cultural output" to "mutual learning among civilizations". International Chinese education is no longer limited to language skill training but integrates a pluralistic cultural perspective through curriculum design to cultivate students' cross-cultural communication skills and global governance awareness. Digital platforms such as "Chinese Language Union" share high-quality resources globally, especially providing support for regions with weak educational resources, both promoting Chinese education and facilitating equal dialogue among different civilizations.

Curriculum design innovation: "Chinese + global governance" competency training. Some universities integrate global governance issues into Chinese education, promoting integrated training of "curriculum learning - organizational internship - governance practice". By offering characteristic courses such as "Chinese + International Relations" and "Chinese + Sustainable Development", compound talents who are proficient in Chinese and understand global governance rules are cultivated, laying a talent foundation for multilateral cooperation.

Diversification of governance subjects: Building a collaborative mechanism of "government - universities - international organizations". Through cooperation with the education departments of target countries, universities, and international organizations such as UNESCO, international Chinese education promotes the integration of Chinese into the local national education system, realizing standard mutual recognition and resource sharing. This multi-stakeholder collaborative mechanism

not only ensures the localized adaptation of Chinese education but also enhances its right to speak in global education governance.

3.3. Basic Education Cultural Exchanges: Foundational Project of Cultural Integration

Cultural integration in basic education is the people-to-people foundation for building a global education governance community, whose core lies in cultivating young people's cross-cultural identity through immersive exchanges. Practices such as China-Canada youth exchange programs and China-UK school-based cooperation have explored diversified integration paths.

Immersive experience: Building cross-cultural living scenarios. In the China-Canada youth exchange program, Canadian teachers and students live in Chinese host families and participate in activities such as panda painting, Sichuan opera facial mask making, and tree planting, experiencing Chinese culture in daily practice. Chinese students gain an in-depth understanding of foreign cultural customs through overseas study tours. This immersive experience breaks down cultural barriers and enables young people to establish cross-cultural friendships through emotional resonance.

Curriculum co-construction: Realizing cultural embedding in teaching content. Chengdu Tanghu Primary School and the UK Willow School carry out "same lesson, different teaching methods" activities. With the same picture book as the link, Chinese and British teachers integrate cultural elements such as aerospace spirit and drama teaching methods respectively, realizing civilization dialogue through teaching innovation. The creative integration of "British roses and pandas playing with bamboo" in paper-cutting workshops and cross-cultural creations of "Nottingham Castle and Western Sichuan dwellings" in pottery classes all reflect cultural integration in curriculum co-construction.

Mechanism innovation: Building long-term exchange platforms. Through the establishment of long-term mechanisms such as sister schools, principal forums, and teacher training bases, the normalization of cultural integration in basic education is promoted. In the ten-year cooperation between Tanghu Primary School and Willow School, a virtuous cycle of "curriculum mutual learning, teaching and research joint consultation, and activity co-organization" has been formed, providing a sustainable model for cross-cultural educational practice.

4. Practical Challenges of Cultural Integration in Global Education Governance

4.1. Cultural Adaptation Imbalance: Contradiction Between One-Way Output and Local Resistance

Some international educational projects still have a "cultural centralism" tendency, simply transplanting domestic educational models and ignoring the particularities of local culture, leading to cultural resistance and practical failure. A proposal by the China National Democratic Construction Association points out that vocational colleges generally lack in-depth research on the local cultural environment when "going global", and the problem of "acclimatization" of courses and teachers is prominent. For example, a vocational college in Nigeria's hotel management major did not consider the local religious prayer time and implemented a "24-hour front desk service" according to Chinese standards, resulting in graduates' difficulty in adapting to local employment needs. Some international Chinese education courses still focus on the display of Chinese cultural symbols and fail to deeply connect with the social needs of target countries, affecting cultural recognition.

4.2. Digital Divide Constraints: Insufficient Inclusiveness of Technological Empowerment

Digital technology provides an efficient carrier for cultural integration, but the global digital divide leads to insufficient inclusiveness of technological empowerment. Only 33% of vocational colleges in Sub-Saharan Africa have basic network conditions. In Jiangsu's vocational education "going global" projects, the utilization rate of some intelligent training equipment is less than 50% due to unstable local power supply. Although digital platforms such as "Chinese Language Union" provide

high-quality resources, students in low-income countries face difficulties in effectively participating in online learning due to lack of equipment and poor network conditions, limiting the coverage of cultural integration.

4.3. Standard Mutual Recognition Barriers: Institutional Conflicts Caused by Cultural Differences

Institutional differences behind cultural differences lead to numerous obstacles in education standard mutual recognition. At present, although China's vocational education standards have achieved mutual recognition with 26 African countries, there is still a gap with the certification systems of developed economies such as the EU, restricting the cross-border flow of talents. Similar problems exist in the evaluation standards of international Chinese education. Differences in language teaching norms and cultural value orientations among different countries lead to insufficient international recognition of Chinese proficiency certification, affecting the institutional guarantee of cultural integration.

4.4. Lack of Collaborative Mechanisms: Imbalanced Rights and Responsibilities of Multiple Subjects

Cultural integration requires the collaborative participation of multiple subjects such as governments, universities, enterprises, and international organizations. However, some current projects are dominated by a single subject, and the collaborative mechanism is not sound. In the internationalization of vocational education, the participation of enterprises as industrial demanders is insufficient, leading to the disconnection between talent training and market needs. Cultural exchanges in basic education mostly rely on short-term projects, lacking long-term financial support and policy guarantees, making it difficult to form sustained influence. The China National Democratic Construction Association suggests improving the multi-stakeholder collaborative mechanism by establishing special funds and attracting social capital participation, but in practice, it still faces problems such as difficult policy implementation and insufficient capital investment.

5. Optimization Strategies for Cultural Integration in Global Education Governance

5.1. Conceptual Innovation: Establishing a Integration View of "Two-Way Mutual Learning and Local Adaptation"

Abandoning cultural centralism and strengthening the adaptation concept of "taking the local as the center". International educational projects need to conduct pre-cultural research and establish a "cultural adaptation evaluation matrix" for dynamic adaptation from dimensions such as religious customs, industrial culture, and educational traditions. Vocational education curriculum development should adopt a "modular" design, embedding local cases and cultural elements while retaining core technical standards. International Chinese education needs to focus on the development needs of target countries and develop characteristic courses such as "Chinese + vocational skills" and "Chinese + global governance", realizing the in-depth binding of language dissemination and local development.

Cultivating cross-cultural competence and building a "bicultural" teacher and management team. Through overseas study tours and local training, teachers' cross-cultural teaching ability is improved. Local educators and enterprise technicians are absorbed into curriculum design and management to give play their role as cultural intermediaries. The mixed teaching model of "Chinese teachers + local teachers" in Jiangsu Zheng He College and the "joint teacher training" mechanism in Changzhou Vocational Institute of Mechatronic Technology both provide effective references for improving cross-cultural collaborative capacity.

5.2. Mechanism Construction: Building a Guarantee System of "Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration and Shared Benefits"

Establishing multilateral consultation mechanisms to promote standard co-construction and mutual recognition. Under the framework of multilateral platforms such as the BRICS Vocational Education Alliance and UNESCO-UNEVOC, education standards are jointly developed with different countries, adopting a model of "common foundation + local rules" to balance global common needs and local specific demands. The "water supply and drainage engineering technology" standards developed by Jiangsu University of Architectural Technology in cooperation with Cameroon and Tanzania have achieved academic mutual recognition through the "tripartite consultation" (Chinese vocational colleges + local education departments + enterprises), providing a practical sample for standard co-construction.

Improving financing and policy support mechanisms. Drawing on the experience of the EU Erasmus+ program, a mixed financing model of "government guidance + enterprise investment + international organization matching" is explored, and special funds for vocational education "going global" and cultural integration incentive mechanisms are established. Tax incentives and financial subsidies are provided to universities and enterprises actively participating in cultural integration practices to encourage them to carry out localized curriculum development and cross-cultural teacher training. The effectiveness of cultural integration is incorporated into the evaluation system of education internationalization, guiding projects to transform from "scale expansion" to "quality improvement".

5.3. Technological Empowerment: Building an Integration Platform of "Digital Inclusion and Precise Adaptation"

Promoting the localization and lightweight transformation of digital educational resources. Targeting the network and equipment conditions of developing countries, mobile-adaptable and offline-accessible digital curriculum resources are developed to reduce technical thresholds. The "Africa Digital Learning Supermarket" planned by Jiangsu integrates modular online courses and simple training resources to provide accurately adapted digital services for African vocational colleges, which is worthy of promotion.

Using intelligent technology to improve the precision of cultural adaptation. Through big data analysis of students' cultural backgrounds and learning habits, personalized recommendations of curriculum content and teaching methods are realized. Virtual simulation technology is used to build cross-cultural training scenarios, enabling students to improve their cross-cultural communication skills through immersive experience. The "remote control robot + low-carbon issues" cross-cultural practice of Chengdu Yinghua School has realized the organic combination of cultural exchange and competence training through technological empowerment.

6. Conclusion

The transformation of global education governance is essentially a process of civilization dialogue and value reconstruction. As a core path to address the dilemma of "Western-centrism" and realize the coexistence of diverse civilizations, cultural integration has become increasingly important. Through theoretical sorting and case analysis, this paper finds that cultural integration is not a simple cultural superposition, but a dynamic process of "two-way embedding, value coexistence, and benefit sharing" guided by symbiosis theory in curriculum restructuring, teacher collaboration, and mechanism innovation. The technology and culture dual-drive of Jiangsu Zheng He College, the immersive exchange of China-Canada youth, and the paradigm shift of international Chinese education all confirm the core value of cultural integration in improving educational governance efficiency and enhancing people-to-people bonds.

However, cultural integration still faces practical challenges such as cultural adaptation imbalance, digital divide constraints, and standard mutual recognition barriers, which require efforts from multiple dimensions including conceptual innovation, mechanism construction, and technological

empowerment. In the future, global education governance should establish a integration view of "two-way mutual learning", build a multi-stakeholder collaborative guarantee system, and rely on digital technology to build an inclusive and beneficial integration platform, making cultural integration a core driving force for promoting educational equity and common development. From the spirit of peaceful trade in Zheng He's maritime expeditions to the cross-border integration practice of contemporary vocational education, from the cross-cultural friendship of young people to the co-construction and sharing of multilateral education standards, cultural integration is injecting educational power into the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind, promoting global education governance towards a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable new stage.

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