

# ***A Study on the Function of Educating People and the Construction of School Motto Culture in Chinese and English Universities***

**Lin Lin<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>Humanities School, Chengyi College, Jimei University, Xiamen, Fujian, China  
a. Josieliin5@hhu.edu.cn*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** Despite the increasing mobility and exchange of education around the world, education still faces the challenge of adapting to rapidly changing social needs and promoting innovation and lifelong learning. This paper analyzes the differences and similarities in the setting of educational functions between China and Britain by taking the university motto in the construction of campus culture as an example. This paper analyzes the differences in educational objectives between Chinese and British higher education institutions due to their different historical and cultural backgrounds. The concrete manifestation is: the mode of education, the idea and the way of teaching. And the establishment of cultural construction has a very great positive effect on education. Based on this, this paper puts forward the following suggestions: to deepen the understanding of the construction of campus culture, to promote the cultivation of international perspectives of students and educators in various ways, and to help students and educators understand the educational practice under different cultural backgrounds. To improve the quality of education, and always provide profound insights and theoretical support for the development of education in the era of globalization.

**Keywords:** Education, School Motto, Cultural Construction

## **1. Introduction**

Today's social background is multi-dimensional and complex, influenced by many factors. The global flow and exchange of world politics, economy, culture, technology, information and education are increasing day by day, and the interdependence among countries is deepening. At this time, the education system is facing the challenge of adapting to the needs of a rapidly changing society and fostering innovation and lifelong learning. Education in the context of globalization is becoming more open, diverse and interconnected, aiming to cultivate talents who can adapt to the challenges of globalization and are internationally competitive.

Education is the foundation of national development and the hope of every family. Not only that, in the current educational process, it has been proved that the establishment of cultural construction can have a great impact on educators and students. Exploring the cultural construction in education plays an active role in improving the effectiveness and development of education.

As the spiritual purpose of the school, the school motto carries the dual responsibilities of educating people and cultural construction, and plays an important role in the construction of campus

culture. Based on this, the theme of this study is: The differences and similarities in the setting of education between China and Britain in the current era -- a case study of the "school motto" in the construction of campus culture.

## 2. Impact

### 2.1. Case Study

The "school motto" in the construction of campus culture has a profound connotation in the course of education. The significance of school motto in education is multifaceted, it is not only a cultural symbol of a school, but also the embodiment of its educational philosophy and spiritual pursuit. It has had a profound impact on all aspects of education. Therefore, there are some differences between Chinese and British school mottos. For example, the school mottos of Chinese schools often emphasize collectivism, patriotism and moral cultivation, "seeking truth from facts and innovation" (Zhejiang University), which reflects the importance of personal morality and contribution to the country. In addition, many Chinese colleges and universities are quoted from Confucian classics, with the same values and aesthetics [1]. British schools tend to emphasize the individual pursuit of truth, academic freedom, and critical thinking, such as "Let there be light" (University College London) and "Mind over matter" (University of Warwick), which emphasize the importance of knowledge, wisdom and personal spirit; For another example, the school motto of Chinese schools is usually closely related to the country's development strategy, emphasizing the service of the country and society, such as "Red professional development, science and practice integration" (University of Science and Technology of China), reflecting the combination of professional skills and political consciousness. The British school motto emphasized more academic research and personal development, such as "Scientia imperii decus et tutamen" (Imperial College London), meaning "science is the glory and refuge of the empire", emphasizing the importance of scientific knowledge to the country. Through these cases, Through analysis, it can be concluded that the differences between Chinese and British school mottos are not only reflected in language and expression, but also reflect the differences between the two countries in many aspects.

### 2.2. Cause Analysis

#### 2.2.1. History and Culture

China's education system has a long history and has undergone many reforms and developments. The ancient Chinese education took Confucianism as the core, attaching importance to moral education and literary accomplishment. The humanistic spirit of Confucianism determines the non-religious nature of Chinese culture, so Chinese education has served the ruling class since ancient times, reflecting a strong political color [2]. From the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, China began to introduce Western education concepts and establish a modern education system. Entering the 21st century, China's education continues to expand its scale, improve its quality, implement quality-oriented education, and promote the popularization and balanced development of compulsory education. Higher education has experienced a historical process from elite to popularization.

Take Nanjing University, a Chinese institution of higher learning. The earliest can be traced back to the first year of Sun Wu Yong'an (258) Nanjing Imperial School, founded in 1902 Sanjiang Normal School. In 1928, it was renamed National Central University. In 1948, it ranked first in Asia in the Princeton World University Ranking, and in 1949, the National Central University, the highest institution in China, was renamed National Nanjing University. "Sincere and majestic, inspiring learning" is the eight-character school motto of NTU, "sincere and majestic" was originally the school

motto of Central University, and "inspiring learning and courageous action" is selected from the famous sentences of ancient Chinese sages [3]. The word "encourage learning" often appears in ancient Chinese literature. Emperor Zhenzong of Song wrote a poem called "Encourage Learning" to encourage people to study hard.

As can be seen from the above cases, the school motto of different colleges and universities has its characteristics and is often closely linked with the history of the school, which is the distillation and summary of the unique culture formed in the development process of the school. Nanjing University's "sincere and majestic, encouraging learning and action" has evolved through many periods, and condensed the historical and cultural traditions of the university.

The British education system is centuries old. Since the 6th century, British education has undergone many important reforms, forming today's relatively complete education system. Education in Britain is mainly associated with religious institutions. In England, the 1902 Education Act marked the establishment of the national education system, and education became a social service provided by the local government. In 1944, a system of primary, secondary and continuing education was established. The UK government actively promotes international education with the aim of expanding education exports and increasing the number of international students. UK education exports make an important contribution to economic growth and the government promotes UK education through a variety of policies and programmes, as well as building relationships with global partners. At the end of the 20th century, the reform of the British education system focused on social justice and educational equity, shifting from the elite education model to a more universal and inclusive education system. British higher education, known for its classical universities (such as Oxford and Cambridge) and red brick universities, has in recent years focused on the quality of education and social engagement. The UK's education system is renowned for its high quality and rigor, while the government is constantly pushing to internationalize and modernize education to meet the challenges of globalization. The school motto has a long history in Western countries, and the earliest school motto can be traced back to Italy in the 11th century. The school motto in Western countries has a strong political color, and the development of Western history and social background will directly affect the formulation of the school motto in that era. However, no matter how The Times change, the school motto is always the product of national ideology, and this basis will not change [4].

Education systems in both countries are constantly evolving and reforming to adapt to social changes and the needs of the people.

### 2.2.2. Educational Objectives

Both China and Britain have emphasized the importance of talent training in their higher education training goals, but they have their own emphases and characteristics.

"I think there are two things at the heart of the spirit of the university, the first is the pursuit of excellence in everything it does, and the second is free and open debate." - Andrew Hamilton, Chancellor of the University of Oxford [5]. This is his interpretation of Oxford's motto. British higher education embodies respect for students' choice of major, provides the freedom of professional adjustment, and establishment of entrepreneurship centers and other services. Establish an education quality monitoring and control system to ensure the quality of education through external regulatory bodies such as the Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency and the Office of Student Affairs, as well as internal systems. The University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge emphasize openness and internationality and promote multicultural exchanges. Promote the integration of scientific research and teaching, and pay attention to innovation and entrepreneurship education.

The training goal of China's higher education is to adhere to the fundamental task of cultivating virtuous people and to train socialist builders and successors with ideals, morality, culture, and discipline. Higher education is integrated with the country's major strategic needs to train talents

capable of solving key technical problems. Establish an education quality standard system, and formulate academic quality standards and physical health standards. It is necessary to carry out ideological and political education throughout the whole process of personnel training and uphold the overall leadership of the Party. The motto of Tsinghua University, "Self-Discipline and Social Commitment". As Liang Qichao said: "The gentleman's self-encouragement of the continuous operation of the day, there must be no violent cold." A scholar must especially be patient and resolute in his determination. Do the right thing and avoid danger." Moral commitment requires Tsinghua students to have unity and cooperation, self-discipline, and selfless dedication of the mind [6].

### 3. Influence

University spirit is the soul of running a university. As an important part of university spirit, it is one of the important ways to cultivate university spirit effectively by refining and carrying forward the school motto. Interpreting the school motto is the key to studying university campus culture. To sum up, many factors such as historical and cultural background will be considered in the setting of the school motto, and such different ways of setting the school motto will have a certain impact on the cultural construction of education.

#### 3.1. Educational Methods

Higher education in the UK gives students who are not innovative in their courses a passing grade at best. In British universities, almost every course requires students to carry out corresponding analytical research to complete a project. That is to say, teachers generally only give solutions or cases, without providing specific methods to students, and then students need to complete by themselves or with group members. This way of education enables each student to exchange ideas boldly and enthusiastically in class, cultivate their initiative to acquire knowledge, and improve their thinking abilities such as self-study, analysis, judgment and reasoning. Teachers are only the organizers of teaching activities, providing students with necessary guidance and help in the process of activities.

In China, under the exam-oriented education mode, teachers play a leading role in the teaching process. Students' academic achievement is mainly measured by exam scores, and the scores of important tests such as college entrance examinations have become the main ways to evaluate students' learning effect and social approval. In 1913, the then president of Fudan University, Mr. Li Teng-hui, commissioned one of the founding presidents of Fudan University, Mr. Ma Xiangbo, who had a profound knowledge of ancient Chinese, to help select and formulate Fudan's school motto. In the end, the two gentlemen found the most in line with Fudan's spirit of "erudite and sincere, inquiring and thinking". This sentence comes from the Analects of Confucius Zi Zhang, Zi Xia said: "Learned and sincere, cut and think, benevolence in it" [7]. It means: reading widely, studying widely, being able to stick to their aspirations, asking questions earnestly, and thinking more about current matters, benevolence is among them. It is very consistent with the idea that the teaching content is usually designed around the exam outline, emphasizing the systematic learning of textbook knowledge, and students need to master a lot of knowledge points to get good results in standardized tests. It requires students to read widely and be present.

#### 3.2. Concept

There are great differences in teaching ideas between China and Britain. Chinese education emphasizes the mastery of subject knowledge, while British education pays more attention to the cultivation of students' practical ability. Take the ASCL Model Center for Education and Teaching Standards (OFSTED) in the United Kingdom as an example, its education focuses on cultivating

students to choose learning methods independently, closely combining learning and work, and focusing on practice. For example, the motto of Imperial College London is "Scientia imperii decus et tutamen", which means "science is the honor and defense of the Empire", emphasizing the importance of science, technology and innovation in the development of the school and the country. Imperial College London is a well-rounded institution that values exploration and discovery, fostering innovation and the application of scientific and technological ideas in the country. However, Chinese education pays attention to the teaching and understanding of knowledge points, and pays attention to the guidance of applied knowledge on the premise of mastering basic knowledge. Take Sun Yat-sen University as an example, "learned interrogation, careful thinking, discerning and practicing", the school motto comes from "Li Ji -The Mean", that is, study extensively, ask carefully, think carefully, identify clearly, and firmly implement. This kind of education is especially suitable for the basic Chinese cultural background. In terms of educational philosophy, British education pays more attention to creative thinking and encourages students to explore their interests and hobbies. On the other hand, Chinese education emphasizes discipline and encourages children to take the initiative to learn and respect rules. British education emphasizes transformational education, so that students can maintain a diversified and diversified way of thinking and behavior in the process of growth. However, Chinese education emphasizes stimulating students' interest and guiding students to think and act according to rules. The school motto of Chinese and foreign colleges and universities expresses the two dimensions of "knowledge" and "practice" of the educational concept of knowledge and practice, but there is still a fierce collision in the cultural consciousness: the school motto of foreign colleges and universities focuses on individual development, emphasizing "freedom" and "faith" [8].

### 3.3. Behavior Mode

Chinese education and British education both emphasize "paying attention to every student", British education advocates "every student is important", while Chinese education advocates "everything for students, everything for students". Although there is common ground, the essence is different. The UK attaches great importance to personalized education, especially in higher education. These noteworthy points also have a certain impact on the teaching method and the behavior of students.

The motto of University College London is "Cuncti absent meritaque expectant premia Palmae", which means "all men expect rewards and honors of achievement". The motto emphasizes that the development of the college is also closely related to the growth of students. The College wants each of its students to have the opportunity to participate in all areas of the school and to earn the honor they deserve through hard work. It attaches importance to the characteristics of "humanization" and "creativity" of students, and follows the educational concept of personality development.

Zhang Boling, president of Nankai University in China, put forward the motto of the university is "Dedication to public interests, acquisition of all-round capability, and aspiration for progress with each day". "Allow justice and ability" means "both public morality and ability". The original intention is to make Nankai students have patriotism and love the public ethics, and the ability to serve the society with husband [8]. In order to make continuous progress, people should advocate positive progress, continuous innovation and change from a dynamic perspective. This precisely reflects that China pays more attention to the "normative" and "institutional" systematic training of students, and has more standardized requirements for students, aiming to make more college graduates meet the current economic and social behavior model and business needs. Therefore, in the process of teaching and learning, the school will pay more attention to the standardized requirements for students.



#### 4. Inspiration

Spiritual culture is the core of campus culture. They are the soul and essence of college campus culture [9]. School motto is a kind of culture in the ideological form of colleges and universities, and is the soul of the school. It exists in the deep heart of teachers and students in the form of psychological state, ideological form, etc., and also manifests itself in traditional habits, school spirit and other ways.

Based on this, people can not ignore the importance of cultural construction, so in the future education process, people can deeply understand the function of the school motto through various aspects, and give full play to its role in education. Strive to shape the spirit of the university, strive to create school-running characteristics, and strive to cast useful talents [10].

Under the background of the new era, the ideological and political work of colleges and universities should be carried out with the school motto as the core, and the two are closely linked. School motto is a kind of invisible spiritual force with strong guidance. College motto is not a simple slogan, but a sublimation of the purpose and concept of running a college, which has a strong guiding effect on the behavior norms and value concepts of teachers and students. The university motto deepens the interpretation of cultivating and practicing socialist core values [11]. At present, many colleges and universities have realized the importance of the construction of school motto, and at the same time, they have explored the motto which can better represent the characteristics of the school. In this process, colleges and universities should have a deep grasp of education, tradition, and characteristics, which is the basis of the extraction of the school motto. At the same time, colleges and universities should deeply understand the educational function of the school motto and give full play to it, which has great help for colleges and universities to achieve long-term and stable development goals and promote students' better growth and progress.

In the context of globalization, the exchanges and cooperation between China and the UK in the field of education have become increasingly close. Not only for the construction of campus culture, but also in the broader scope of education, universities should continue to strengthen mutual trust and communication in the field of education, and promote the sharing and complementarity of educational resources through inter-school cooperation, cross-border education, scientific research cooperation, and exchanges between teachers and students. It can encourage innovative education models and teaching methods, adopting "3+1", "4+0" and other education models, as well as online and hybrid courses, to meet the educational needs of globalization. Attach importance to teachers' professional development and international vision, and enhance teachers' teaching ability and international competitiveness through international exchange and cooperation projects. In the face of the challenges brought by globalization, such as technological innovation, cultural diversity, etc., to cultivate students' cross-cultural communication skills and innovative thinking. Use information technology and digital tools to improve education management, accessibility, and flexibility, especially in distance education and online learning. Finally, the two governments can also jointly develop policies conducive to the internationalization of education, including visa policies, academic accreditation and mutual recognition of academic qualifications. Actively promote the concept of lifelong education, encouraging individuals to continue to learn and improve throughout their careers in order to adapt to a rapidly changing global Labour market.

#### 5. Conclusion

Through in-depth research and analysis of Sino-British education, it is helpful to grasp the development trend of global education and promote international educational exchanges and cooperation. The construction of university culture mentioned in this paper plays a very positive role in education. However, due to the differences in historical and cultural backgrounds and educational goals, higher education schools in China and Britain differ in educational methods, educational

concepts, and teaching methods. As an important part of the spiritual culture of colleges and universities, the school motto plays a very profound influence in it. The construction of the school motto not only reflects the idea of running a school in each university but also contains rich connotations of history, culture, and spiritual values. It plays an important role in inspiring educators and students to inherit culture and lead development. This research is not only of great significance to the education systems of the two countries but also has a profound impact on global educational development and cultural exchanges. This kind of cross-cultural education research can promote the innovation of education model, provide ideas for training talents to meet the needs of the future society, discover their respective strengths and weaknesses, so as to realize mutual learning and reference, enhance cultural diversity and inclusiveness, and further understand the value orientation of the society.

## References

- [1] Chen, L. W. (2022). *A Review of the Translation of Chinese University Mottos in the Past 20 Years*. *Journal of Jiangxi Electric Power Technical College*, (11), 153-155.
- [2] Duan, Y. X. (2017). *The Differences in Educational Views Implied by the School Mottos of Chinese and British Universities and Their Inspirations: A Case Study of the School Mottos of 34 Independent Universities in China and Top30 Universities in the UK*. *Journal of Fujian Radio and Television University*, (02), 28-32.
- [3] Jiang, S. S. (2002). *Sincere and Majestic Encouragement of Learning and Action: Centuries-old Tradition and NTU Motto*. *Journal of Nanjing University (Philosophy. Human Sciences. Social Sciences)*, (3), 5-7.
- [4] Jiang, S. S. (2002). *Sincere and Majestic Encouragement of Learning and Action: Century-old Tradition and School Motto of Nanjing University*. *Jiangsu Higher Education*, (4), 12-13.
- [5] Huang, J. H. (2022). *Research on the Realization and Optimization of Ideological and Political Education Function of College Motto in the New Era*. *Jiangxi Agricultural University*.
- [6] Tian, Q. (2020). *The motto of Tsinghua University is "Self-improvement, Moral Commitment"*. Retrieved from <http://xsg.tsinghua.edu.cn/publish/xsg/8351/2019/20190425143357248365530/20190425143357248365530.html>.
- [7] Yang, X. L. (2004). *On the Cultivation of University Spirit*. *Higher Education Research*, (2), 20-23.
- [8] Ding, X., Wang, W. X., and Lu, Z. J. (2022). *Research on the Concept of Knowledge and Action Education from the Perspective of School Motto in Chinese and Foreign Universities*. *Education Culture BBS*, (04), 90-95.
- [9] Wu, R. (2011). *On the Construction of Campus Culture*. *Literature and Education Materials*, (23), 89-91.
- [10] Cheng, B. W. (2022). *Analysis of the Function and Significance of University Motto*. *Science Advisory (Education Research)*, (08), 10-12.
- [11] Lin, Y. X., and Qi, C. (2020). *Research on Integrating the spirit of University motto into the Education of Socialist Core Values of College Students*. *Journal of Chengdu University of Traditional Chinese Medicine (Educational Science Edition)*, (03), 57-60.