



Cross Cultural Understanding in Educational Perspective: Asian Phenomenon and Critics

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Abstract

In an era marked by globalization and interconnectedness, the importance of cross-cultural understanding in education cannot be overstated. This article delves into the unique landscape of Asian educational systems, examining the phenomenon of cross-cultural understanding and the associated critiques. By exploring the intricate interplay between cultural diversity and educational practices, we aim to shed light on the challenges and opportunities that arise in fostering cross-cultural understanding in the Asian educational context. This research uses qualitative methods with literature review as the research technique. there are 4 perspectives and phenomena of CCU in Asia revealed in this research; cultures, languages, traditions, and educational systems. Cross-cultural interactions within Asia are rich and diverse due to the continent's vast array of cultures, languages, religions, and historical backgrounds. While it's essential to recognize the heterogeneity within Asian cultures, some general themes and considerations can be explored: Cultural Diversity, Communication Styles, and Hierarchy and Respect.

1. INTRODUCTION

Multiculture refers to the coexistence and interaction of diverse cultural groups within a particular society or community. This concept recognizes the presence of various ethnicities, languages, religions, and traditions, fostering an environment where individuals from different backgrounds can maintain and express their unique identities. The term underscores the richness that arises from the convergence of multiple cultural perspectives, contributing to a vibrant tapestry of human experiences. In multicultural societies, individuals often engage in cross-cultural interactions, leading to increased cultural awareness, appreciation, and a sense of shared citizenship. This dynamic interplay between different cultural elements serves as a foundation for social cohesion and inclusivity, highlighting the importance of recognizing and valuing diversity (Berry, J. W. 2003)

Cross-cultural understanding in the educational context, particularly within the diverse landscapes of Asian societies, has gained significance as the world becomes more

interconnected. Scholars and educators have explored the implications, challenges, and benefits associated with integrating cross-cultural perspectives into educational practices. In their research, Chua and Kim (2019) emphasized the importance of fostering cross-cultural competence in Asian educational systems to prepare students for a globalized world. They argued that exposure to diverse cultures enhances communication skills, empathy, and a broader worldview, contributing to a more harmonious and interconnected society.

On the positive side, cross-cultural education in Asia has been associated with improved global competence and international collaboration. According to Lee and Wong (2020), cultural exchange programs within Asia and with international partners facilitate the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and educational best practices. These programs provide students with the opportunity to experience different educational systems firsthand, promoting a deeper understanding of cultural diversity.

However, critics such as Zhang and Li (2021) have raised concerns about the potential challenges and pitfalls associated with cross-cultural understanding initiatives in Asian education. They argue that there is a risk of uniformity overshadowing diversity, with a tendency toward a standardized global curriculum that may not resonate with the unique cultural contexts of Asian societies. Additionally, concerns have been raised about the potential dominance of Western perspectives in cross-cultural education, leading to the neglect of the rich cultural heritage within Asia (Chen, 2022).

In addressing these criticisms, scholars emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity and a nuanced understanding of local contexts. Wang and Gupta (2018) advocate for an inclusive approach that avoids stereotypes and ensures equitable access to cross-cultural education for all socio-economic groups. Moreover, they highlight the need to balance language acquisition benefits with the preservation of indigenous languages to prevent linguistic inequality.

In conclusion, the literature on cross-cultural understanding in the educational perspective of Asia underscores both its positive impacts and potential criticisms. As educational systems adapt to the challenges of a globalized world, ongoing research and thoughtful implementation are essential to create an inclusive and culturally sensitive framework for cross-cultural education in Asian societies.

2. THEORY OF THE RESEARCH

Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, introduced in the late 1970s, is a comprehensive framework for analyzing cultural differences across nations based on six key dimensions. These dimensions include Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Masculinity vs. Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-Term Orientation vs. Short-Term Normative Orientation, and Indulgence vs. Restraint. The Power Distance dimension assesses the extent to which a society accepts hierarchical differences, while Individualism vs. Collectivism gauges the balance between individual and group interests. Masculinity vs. Femininity examines the distribution of gender roles and values, and Uncertainty Avoidance explores a society's tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty. Long-Term Orientation vs. Short-Term Normative Orientation delves into a society's time orientation, and Indulgence vs. Restraint investigates the extent to which individuals control their impulses. This theory provides a valuable framework for understanding cultural variations, aiding businesses, policymakers, and researchers in navigating intercultural interactions (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 2001).

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory provides a comprehensive and insightful framework for cross-cultural analysis, aiding researchers, businesses, and policymakers in navigating the complexities of intercultural interactions. By recognizing and understanding these dimensions, individuals can gain valuable insights into cultural variations, allowing for more effective communication, collaboration, and negotiation in diverse global contexts

Urie Bronfenbrenner's Social Dependency Theory, developed as an extension of his ecological systems theory, elucidates the reciprocal influence between individuals and their social environments. This theory posits that individuals are not merely passive recipients of environmental influences but actively contribute to and shape their social contexts. According to Bronfenbrenner, the social environment encompasses various nested systems, including the microsystem (immediate surroundings like family and peers), mesosystem (interactions between microsystems), exosystem (external settings indirectly impacting the individual), and macrosystem (larger cultural and societal influences). Social Dependency Theory underscores the bidirectional relationships between individuals and their environments, emphasizing the dynamic interplay that molds human development. Bronfenbrenner's insights have profound implications for understanding the intricate connections between individuals and their social contexts, providing a valuable framework for researchers, educators, and policymakers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative research methods are employed to gain a deeper understanding of social phenomena, exploring the subjective experiences and meanings attributed by individuals involved. In the context of an article on cross-cultural understanding in education, researchers may utilize qualitative methods to investigate the intricacies of cultural interactions, educational practices, and the impact of cultural diversity on learning environments.

"Cross-Cultural Understanding in Educational Perspective" is a multifaceted exploration that delves into the complexities of integrating cultural diversity within educational frameworks. This subject acknowledges the increasing globalization of societies and the imperative for educational institutions to foster intercultural competence among students. Scholars often investigate the impact of cross-cultural understanding on various facets of education, ranging from curriculum design and teaching methodologies to student interactions and institutional policies. The aim is to create an inclusive educational environment that not only recognizes diverse cultural backgrounds but also leverages these differences to enhance the overall learning experience. This educational perspective seeks to cultivate empathy, open-mindedness, and effective communication skills among students, preparing them for active participation in an interconnected world.

Research on cross-cultural understanding in education frequently adopts qualitative methods to capture the nuanced experiences and perceptions of students and educators. Through interviews, focus groups, and observations, scholars aim to uncover the challenges and benefits associated with implementing cross-cultural initiatives. The examination often extends beyond the classroom to encompass broader cultural exchange programs, collaborative projects, and the role of technology in facilitating cross-cultural interactions. By elucidating the intricacies of cross-cultural understanding in an

educational context, researchers contribute valuable insights to educational theory and practice, aiding educators and policymakers in creating more culturally responsive and inclusive learning environments.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the diverse continent of Asia, the phenomenon of cross-cultural understanding holds significant relevance due to the myriad of cultures, languages, and traditions that coexist within its borders. With countries like China, India, Japan, and others, each boasting distinct cultural heritages, the need for effective cross-cultural understanding becomes paramount. Educational systems across Asia face the challenge of preparing students to navigate this rich tapestry of diversity. Acknowledging the importance of cross-cultural competence in an increasingly interconnected world, educators in Asia are exploring ways to integrate cultural sensitivity into curricula, fostering an environment where students can appreciate, respect, and engage with the diversity surrounding them.

The educational perspective on cross-cultural understanding in Asia often involves initiatives such as cultural exchange programs, language learning opportunities, and the incorporation of diverse cultural elements into teaching materials. These endeavors aim to provide students with practical experiences that go beyond theoretical knowledge, allowing them to interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. In doing so, educational institutions in Asia aspire to nurture a generation of global citizens who can effectively collaborate, communicate, and thrive in a world characterized by cultural interdependence.

However, challenges exist in achieving meaningful cross-cultural understanding. Critics argue that there is a risk of superficial engagement or tokenism, where the emphasis on cross-cultural activities may not lead to genuine understanding but rather perpetuate stereotypes or reinforce existing power dynamics. Additionally, the sheer diversity within Asia poses a challenge, as efforts to generalize or homogenize cultural practices may overlook the unique characteristics of individual societies. Balancing the need for a global perspective with the preservation of local cultural identities is a delicate task that educators, policymakers, and researchers in Asia grapple with as they strive to create comprehensive and effective approaches to cross-cultural understanding in education.

The phenomenon of cross-cultural understanding in Asia reflects the intricate interplay between the rich tapestry of cultural diversity and the educational systems that seek to prepare individuals for a globally interconnected future. As Asia continues to play a crucial role in the global landscape, fostering cross-cultural understanding becomes not only an educational imperative but also a societal necessity for building bridges across diverse communities and promoting mutual respect and collaboration.

4.1. Cultures

The Asian phenomenon of cross-cultural understanding is a dynamic and intricate process, given the vast cultural diversity across the continent. As Asia becomes increasingly interconnected on the global stage, the importance of fostering cross-cultural understanding is underscored by the need for effective communication and collaboration. For instance, initiatives such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) bring together nations with diverse cultural backgrounds, emphasizing the necessity of mutual respect and understanding. Countries like Singapore, with its

multicultural society, exemplify the successful integration of cross-cultural understanding into educational practices and societal norms. The National University of Singapore (NUS) incorporates cross-cultural communication skills into its curriculum to equip students for an internationalized world, emphasizing the ability to navigate diverse cultural contexts (Koh, 2016).

However, this phenomenon is not without its critics. Some argue that the drive towards cross-cultural understanding in Asia may inadvertently lead to a superficial and tokenistic approach, where the emphasis on diversity is more symbolic than substantive. Critics point to instances where cultural elements are reduced to stereotypes or where educational initiatives lack depth in addressing the complexities of cross-cultural interactions. For example, the rapid globalization of industries in countries like China has led to concerns that the integration of Western management practices may overshadow and diminish the value of traditional Chinese organizational culture (Warner, 2019).

Additionally, there are concerns about the potential dominance of Western perspectives in the discourse on cross-cultural understanding. Critics argue that an overreliance on Western theories and frameworks may marginalize indigenous knowledge and perspectives. For instance, in the field of psychology, the universal applicability of Western psychological theories has been questioned, prompting a call for greater cultural inclusivity and the development of indigenous psychological frameworks in Asia (Yang, 2019).

In conclusion, The process with both positive examples and valid criticisms. While initiatives and educational practices in Asia strive to enhance cultural sensitivity and communication skills, critics highlight the need for a nuanced and authentic approach that goes beyond surface-level engagement. Striking a balance between appreciating cultural diversity and preserving local identities is crucial for ensuring that cross-cultural understanding in Asia is meaningful and transformative.

4.2. Languages,

In the realm of cross-cultural understanding, language plays a pivotal role in shaping interactions and perceptions. Asia, a continent of immense linguistic diversity, exemplifies the challenges and opportunities inherent in cross-cultural communication through language. Phenomena such as multilingualism and the coexistence of various language families contribute to the intricate tapestry of Asian cultures. For example, in India, a country known for its linguistic diversity, with hundreds of languages spoken, cross-cultural understanding involves navigating the nuances of languages like Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, and many others. The phenomenon here lies in the intricate dance of linguistic diversity, where individuals must navigate a complex linguistic landscape to communicate effectively.

However, critics argue that language can be a double-edged sword, sometimes reinforcing cultural hierarchies or perpetuating linguistic inequalities. For instance, the dominance of English as a global lingua franca has been both a facilitator and a challenge in cross-cultural communication. While English proficiency may enhance opportunities for international collaboration, it can also inadvertently marginalize local languages and dialects, leading to concerns about cultural homogenization. This phenomenon is evident in various Asian countries where English is often prioritized over indigenous languages in educational and professional settings (Lin, 2013).

Addressing these challenges requires a nuanced approach to cross-cultural language understanding in Asia. Initiatives promoting the preservation of indigenous languages alongside the promotion of global languages can foster a more inclusive linguistic environment. For instance, bilingual education programs in regions like Hong Kong, where English and Cantonese coexist, aim to develop proficiency in both languages, acknowledging the importance of both local and global communication (Wong & Wu, 2019).

The Asian phenomenon of cross-cultural understanding through language is intricate and multifaceted. The linguistic diversity in Asia presents both challenges and opportunities, with language serving as a key conduit for cultural expression and exchange. By acknowledging and addressing the critiques surrounding language in cross-cultural understanding, educators and policymakers can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable linguistic landscape in Asia.

4.3. Traditions

The interplay between tradition and cross-cultural understanding in Asia presents a captivating yet complex phenomenon. Asia, home to diverse cultures deeply rooted in traditions, showcases the richness of heritage but also the challenges associated with bridging cultural gaps. Traditional practices, rituals, and values are integral components of Asian societies, contributing to the region's distinct identity. For example, in Japan, the concept of "Wa" or harmony is deeply embedded in the cultural tradition, emphasizing social cohesion and collective well-being. Understanding and respecting such traditions become paramount in fostering effective cross-cultural communication.

However, critics argue that an overemphasis on tradition may lead to cultural essentialism or stereotyping, limiting the scope of understanding and perpetuating outdated cultural norms. The phenomenon of relying excessively on traditional frameworks can hinder the recognition of individual agency and the dynamic evolution of cultures. It is essential to strike a balance between appreciating and preserving traditions while acknowledging the fluid nature of culture. This is evident in debates surrounding the conservation of traditional practices in the face of globalization and modernization in various Asian societies (Yoshino, 2018).

Addressing these complexities requires a nuanced approach to cross-cultural understanding in Asia that appreciates the dynamic nature of traditions. Initiatives that promote cultural exchange, dialogue, and the exploration of shared values can facilitate a deeper understanding of traditions while avoiding the pitfalls of cultural essentialism. For instance, cultural festivals that bring together diverse communities in countries like India or China provide spaces for cross-cultural interactions that transcend traditional boundaries (Biswas, 2017).

The Asian phenomenon of cross-cultural understanding through tradition is shaped by the intricate interplay between heritage and contemporary dynamics. While traditions are valuable for preserving cultural identities, it is essential to approach them with a critical lens to foster genuine understanding. By navigating the delicate balance between tradition and modernity, societies in Asia can cultivate a more inclusive and adaptable approach to cross-cultural interactions.

4.5. Educational systems

The phenomenon of cross-cultural understanding in Asian educational systems is shaped by the intricate tapestry of diverse cultures, languages, and traditions across the continent. Asian countries exhibit a range of educational approaches influenced by cultural norms and societal values. For instance, in Confucian-influenced East Asian countries such as South Korea and China, there is a strong emphasis on academic achievement, discipline, and respect for authority within the educational system. Understanding the cultural underpinnings of these systems is crucial for educators and policymakers aiming to create effective and culturally responsive learning environments.

However, critics argue that the Asian educational phenomenon is not without challenges. The intense focus on standardized testing and rote memorization in some Asian systems has faced criticism for potentially stifling creativity and critical thinking skills among students. This phenomenon is evident in debates about the pressure on students in countries like South Korea and Japan, where high-stakes exams determine future educational and career paths (Lee, 2016). Critics suggest the need for a more holistic approach that values diverse learning styles and fosters a broader set of skills.

Efforts to enhance cross-cultural understanding within Asian educational systems often involve initiatives to incorporate diverse perspectives into curricula and promote multicultural education. In Singapore, for instance, a country known for its multicultural society, the educational system integrates elements of different cultures into the curriculum to foster an appreciation for diversity among students (Gopinathan, 2002). This approach acknowledges the need for a balanced and inclusive educational environment that goes beyond cultural stereotypes.

The Asian phenomenon of cross-cultural understanding within educational systems reflects both the strengths and challenges associated with diverse cultural contexts. By recognizing and addressing the criticisms, educators and policymakers can work towards creating educational systems that not only respect cultural diversity but also nurture the development of well-rounded, critically thinking individuals.

5. CONCLUSION

The exploration of Cross-Cultural Understanding in the Educational Perspective within the context of the Asian phenomenon and its associated criticisms underscores the intricate dynamics at play in fostering cultural awareness and harmony. The diverse array of cultures, languages, and traditions across Asia presents both a rich tapestry and a set of challenges in the pursuit of effective cross-cultural understanding. Educational systems within the region, influenced by cultural nuances and traditions, play a pivotal role in shaping the experiences of learners. The recognition of linguistic diversity, preservation of cultural traditions, and the incorporation of inclusive educational practices are paramount for creating environments that genuinely facilitate cross-cultural understanding.

While the educational landscape in Asia strives to embrace global perspectives, it is imperative to address critics' concerns, such as the risk of cultural essentialism and the potential dominance of Western perspectives. Balancing the promotion of global competencies with the preservation of local cultural identities is a nuanced task that requires ongoing refinement of educational approaches. Initiatives that prioritize cultural sensitivity, inclusivity, and the integration of diverse perspectives into curricula can

contribute to the cultivation of a generation equipped to navigate the complexities of an interconnected world.

In essence, fostering cross-cultural understanding in Asian educational settings demands a holistic and adaptive approach that respects cultural diversity, values linguistic nuances, and recognizes the evolving nature of traditions. By heeding critiques and building upon positive aspects, educational stakeholders can contribute to the development of a more inclusive, culturally competent society, where individuals are prepared to engage with global challenges while retaining a deep appreciation for their unique cultural identities.

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