



Developing Global Indicollectivism in International School Systems: Moving from the Western Individualism and Eastern Collectivism

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Abstract

In understanding social interactions and behaviors among communities, there are disparities in cognitive, perceptual, attentional, and social psychological phenomena such as the role of the self in cultural interactions. Some social psychologists have developed a fundamental attribution error that generalizes human behavior across cultures. This minimizes individual cultural uniqueness and the role of an individual and his environment in behavior. This could be a result of the failure to replicate many cultural findings in other regions of the world, thereby supporting the idea that behavior and the environment in which it occurs are interdependent. The model of Information Processing was used in this paper to explain the development of the western individualistic and eastern collectivism cultures, thereby ruling out homogeneous aspects. However, notably, due to globalization, there is significant growth in cultural cross-pollination. This emerging culture tends to have common sets of values, attitudes, norms, and behaviors, that overrule the diverse cultural backgrounds of the communities involved. This paper discusses how western culture differs from eastern culture in interactions and the effects of each in social, economic, and educational advancements. In addition, the paper will explore the future possibility of a blended 'indicollectivist' culture that will diffuse the cons of western and eastern culture to build a strong universal culture.

Key words:

Western individualistic, Eastern collectivism culture, Blended 'Indicollectivist' culture

Introduction

Cultural diversity is a fundamental aspect of human societies, shaping individuals' behaviors, perceptions, and interactions. The trends in global cultures of individualism and collectivism are complex and vary across different regions and societies. However, there has been a noticeable trend towards individualism in many parts of the world, particularly in Western societies, driven by factors such as urbanization, globalization, and the influence of media and technology. Globalization has led to increased cultural interactions, resulting in the blending of diverse cultural elements. In the ever-evolving landscape of international education, the intersections between Western and Eastern cultures have become crucial. On the other hand, in some regions, there is a resurgence or reinforcement of collectivist values, often tied to cultural or political movements aiming to preserve traditional values or address social inequalities. Overall, the balance between individualism and collectivism continues to evolve in response to a variety of economic, social, and cultural factors. This research endeavors to explore the development of a potential 'Indicollectivist' universal culture and its direct implications for educational practices within international schools. By understanding the impact of this emerging cultural identity, we aim to contribute valuable understandings to enhance the effectiveness of global education.

Model of Information Processing

Advanced by George Miller and Richard Shiffrin in the 1960s', this model remains an important cognitive framework that explains how human mind process, stores and retrieves information (Main, 2023). This model offered a valuable conceptual framework for understanding the dynamics of Western and Eastern cultural interactions in this paper. By adapting this model to the context of cultural processing, we can explore how individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds perceive, encode, and process cultural information as it moves through different cognitive stages. In the initial stage (Sensory reception of cultural cues), individuals from Western and Eastern cultures encounter cultural cues through various sensory channels such as language, behavior, customs, and social norms. These cues are akin to the sensory input in Miller and Shiffrin's model.

Cultural diversity within international schools introduces a plethora of stimuli, reflecting the rich tapestry of Western and Eastern traditions. Understanding how individuals perceive and interpret these cultural cues at the sensory level becomes a crucial starting point for investigating cultural interactions. Analogous to short-term memory, short-term processing in the cultural context involves the initial cognitive processing of cultural information. This stage includes the interpretation, categorization, and contextualization of cultural cues. Individuals may rely on stereotypes, preconceived notions, or immediate impressions during this phase. Investigating how individuals from Western and Eastern cultures process and categorize cultural information in short-term cultural memory is vital for comprehending the early stages of cultural interaction.

Finally, Long-term memory in the cultural information processing model corresponds to the integration of cultural knowledge into an individual's cultural schema. This involves the consolidation of cultural information, potentially leading to the development of intercultural competence and adaptability. Long-term integration encompasses the creation of a possible mental framework that accommodates both Western and Eastern cultural elements, fostering a more nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in cross-cultural interactions. This model, therefore, provided a theoretical foundation for exploring the role of cultural memory, adaptability, and intercultural communication skills in the possibility of developing a blended cultural identity within the international school community.

Literature Review

Culture refers to socially learned ways in which different people perceive, feel, think and behave (Lyons, 2018). It therefore exerts immense influence on how different people interact and relate with others especially when they come from different societies or communities. Cultural differences offer potent opportunities through which walls of separations or bridges of understanding between people is build. Culture as a concept incorporates social behaviors, societal institutions and norms that are established and found within human societies. It also includes the knowledge, beliefs, arts, customers, laws, customs, capabilities and habits of both individuals and groups (Tracy, 2016). In most cases, culture originates from or is attributed to specific region or location. Due to globalization, there is increased cultural interaction and exchange which has led to emergence of various sub-cultures and blended cultures as a result of different cultures coming together.

International schools have been at the center of cultural interaction due to the fact that they draw students from different parts of the world with different cultural backgrounds who come to live in the same environment. According to Çelik (2022), international schools today show a multi-faceted and multi-layered notion whose effects and aims can be counted in different contexts such as giving young people education in line with the developing structures of the international systems at individual levels. The term "international education" refers to the various intellectual,

cultural, and educational ties that exist between people from two or more countries and emphasizes global understanding and collaboration.

It makes sense that the possibility of walls, bridges, or both would increase with the degree of cultural diversity in the surrounding area. International schools are therefore extremely pertinent to this debate since they are learning environments that, by definition, have a lot of cultural diversity. Building many, more cultural bridges of understanding rather than walls of isolation among their extremely diverse students and staff is, one of the main goals of such schools (Martin, 2016). International schools host students from different cultures who are required to co-exist in a new environment. This means that the schools need to create an environment that encourages blending of different cultures both Western individualism and Eastern collectivism to have a harmonious environment that encourages active learning and academic participation of all students. If this viewpoint is accepted, all that's left to do is determine the possibility of merging both Western and Eastern culture to come up with an Indocollectivist culture in international schools. This is possible by breaking down cultural barriers in foreign schools and then make a commitment to erecting more bridges and demolishing more walls.

Western Individualistic Culture

Individualist cultures are the types of cultures that put emphasis on the needs of an individual over the needs of the whole group (Grossmann, Huynh, & Ellsworth, 2016). Western individualist culture is a common term that describes the cultural values and norms that are more prevalent in many western societies. It contradicts the collectivists cultures which prioritizes the group harmony, interdependence and creation of a sense of belonging. People in collectivist cultures see the individual as interconnected and encompassing meaningful relationships (Jaafar, Rasoolimanesh, & Ismail, 2017)). In this culture, people's decisions and the reasons behind them are influenced by varying self-conceptions in these cultures. Students from individualistic cultures carry this belief and mindset when joining international schools. They believe in individual efforts and success which sometimes creates conflicts between them and students from other cultures especially because there are some times in the course of their studies that may need group or team work. People in individualist societies, for example, frequently use the preference for the alternative they choose as justification for their personal choices, even though they do not exhibit the same inclination when making decisions for other people. Students from this culture therefore tend to be more focused on themselves and their independence without being mindful of the welfare of the others.

Individualism just like collectivism had its consequences for cognitive style (Omar, Othman, & Mohamed, 2014). Analytical patterns of cognition, such as a limited attention field, manipulation of prominent things through focus, dispositional attributions, and analytical reasoning, seem to be more prevalent in individualist cultures. Self-centeredness attributed to individualistic cultures means that the students will have a narrow focus on a few things around their lives. This gives them the time and opportunity for analytical thinking and reasoning and in the process, they end up reflecting distinct memory recall phenomenologies (Margana , 2016). Particularly, when it comes to remembering social interactions from memory, individualist cultures are more inclined to promote first-person perspectives that offer an inside-out field perspective. This creates room for isolation in international schools for students from individualistic cultures since they tend to have the feeling that everything revolves around them and creates a cultural wall between them and the rest of the community.

According to Lyons (2018), the western individualist culture emphasizes on individual autonomy and it is very common in the United States and Western European countries. Students from these regions carry these cultures with them as they cross borders to international schools. It is also

notable that international schools that are hosted in these countries are founded on this culture and therefore students joining from other regions are expected to conform. Here, people are encouraged to express their unique identities, pursue personal goals and make independent choices and decisions. Individual success and personal achievement are highly valued in these systems and the western societies usually celebrate individual accomplishments whether it is education, career, sports or other domains since the emphasis is usually on personal efforts and merit. This often leads to culture shock among students with different cultural background and which takes them time to adjust or leads to some opting to drop out of school completely (Tracy, 2016). In the same breadth, western individualist culture takes keen interest on individual responsibility (Jaafar, Rasoolimanesh, & Ismail, 2017)). Here, individuals are expected to take personal responsibility for their own actions and decision because they are expected to exercise independence and self-reliance. These two are important virtues through which individuals are encouraged to solve their own problems.

Western individualist culture also places high value on freedom and individual rights exercised through various concepts such as speech, freedom of choice, and protection of individual rights which are also central to the culture ethos (Gina, 2018). Competition is also common in the western individualistic cultures and this happens in both academic, profession as well as social spheres. The aspect of competition therefore forms the basis of motivation for students from this culture as they will always strive to be the best in the society or community as opposed to collective culture which seeks to promote the welfare of the entire community. Individuals are encouraged to compete and strive for excellence and in the process foster innovation and personal growth (Çelik, 2022). Communication also tends to be more direct and society members are encouraged to express their opinions openly and assertively and in a straightforward manner. Given the fact that international schools also host teachers from different cultures, there are cases where these direct communications can be interpreted to mean disrespect to the seniors by the students (Margana , 2016). Under western individualistic culture, a lot of emphasis is put on the nuclear family rather than the extended family networks and independence from the family unit is usually encouraged as individuals mature. This cultural is also often future-oriented time perspective and planning for the future, setting long-term goals and working towards individual aspirations are common cultural values.

Eastern Collectivist Culture

Collectivist culture prioritizes group harmony, interdependence and social cohesion and most dominant among Asian cultures including countries such as China, Japan, South Korea and others (Kei , 2020). This culture champions the overall group success where nobody is left behind and every individual member of the society has the interest of the group or the society at heart. Collectivist culture seeks to maintain groups harmony which is usually prioritized above the individual desires or opinions and therefore individual members of the society are encouraged to conform to the social norms and avoid actions that might disrupt the group cohesion. This is to mean that individuals are seen as grounded within a certain group identity and therefore the idea of separate, autonomous self is deemphasized. According to Krassner et al. (2017), collectivism is a cultural dimension that contrasts with individualism, and emphasizes the interdependence of individuals within a group or society.

Even a person's physical appearance is frequently interpreted as a mirror of their inner self as well as their family, extended family, and possibly the Asian community at large. Just like students from individualist cultures tend to have their own personal interest before any other interest, students from collectivist cultures also tend to have the interest of their communities and societies before their own interest. The differences in their cultural orientation also forms the

basis of economic orientations of both the west and the east. Whereas the west leans towards capitalism, the east are known to practice socialism which seeks to address the interest of the communities before those of an individual. People frequently receive remarks or even demands about how they look, especially from family members, because personal boundaries are not always clear. Collectivists also frequently compare themselves to others in order to make sure they are fitting in with the group (Lilian et al., 2020). As students join international schools, those from collectivist cultures tends to compare themselves with other group members so that they are able to get identity and fit in a certain group while those from individualist cultures compares themselves with the group to make sure that they are outstanding.

Deep feelings of shame are often the result of standing out in a way that detracts from the group or makes the group lose face. These factors make it possible for people whose body types, outward looks, or physical infirmities depart too much from the norm to face rejection from their family and community in addition to personal disappointment (Lyons, 2018). Since these feelings are usually imbedded in the students minds from childhood, as they join a wider community found in the international schools, the feeling that the community will reject them based on their physical appearance still remain in their mind due to the feeling that community and culture in the new learning environment is the same as where they have come from. This might lead to a low self-esteem for the affected students unless it is addressed at the right time. Therefore, in collectivistic cultures, the desire to fit in, be accepted by the group, and avoid humiliation could be the driving force behind changing one's physical appearance (Liu, 2020). This is contrasted with individualistic societies where the goal could be to stand out and win the admiration of the group by receiving praise. Collectivist culture cultivates the aspect of interdependence which places high values on relationships and social connection. Maintaining good relationship between an individual and other family or community members is paramount for the group and individual success (Kei , 2020). In this case, individuals are often closely connected to their nuclear families, extended relatives and social networks. Interpersonal relationships are encouraged because they play a very crucial role in daily life. Collectivism culture encourages loyalty to one's family, company or any other social groups to which an individual belongs. Individual members are therefore expected to prioritize the interests of the group over their person interests. Individual members of the society also tend to focus more on maintaining their own face and the face of others by avoiding public embarrassment and humiliation.

The culture avoids direct confrontation or explicit communication and instead, indirect communication styles are highly encouraged. People therefore rely more on non-verbal cues and contexts to understand each other. There is often a focus on long-term goals and planning, with an emphasis on perseverance and patience. This is in contrast to the more short-term orientation often associated with individualist cultures. It is important to note that while these generalizations provide an overview of tendencies in Eastern collectivist cultures, there can be significant variations within and between different East Asian societies. Moreover, with globalization and changing socio-economic conditions there are ongoing shifts in cultural values and practices. Individuals within these cultures may also display a mix of collectivists and individualist traits.

Impact on Various Aspects of Society

Both cultural orientations significantly influence societal structures, economic models, and educational systems (Hafer, 2016). Most educational institutions are founded on the prevailing societal cultures in areas where they are located and these cultures forms the foundations of their value systems. Understanding and managing interactions between Western and Eastern cultures

in international schools is crucial for fostering a positive and inclusive learning environment especially because these schools host learners from different and diverse cultures (Cohen, Wu, & Miller, 2016). Both individualistic and collectivist cultures have profound influences on various aspects of society, shaping people's values, behaviors, and institutions. It is important to note that individualism and collectivism exist on a spectrum, and many societies exhibit elements of both. However, some cultures emphasize one orientation more than the other. Both individualistic and collectivist cultures define the social structures of members of different and specific societies. They shape the belief systems as well as both individual and societal expectations where individuals are expected to behave in a certain way towards the society. Whereas individualist cultures expect society members to be more self-centered, the collectivist culture expects community members to focus more on group harmony. Culture also shapes the values and norms in a given society (Palmer, 2021).

Whereas collectivist cultures values group loyalty, co-operation and harmony as well as emphasizing on social norms of group conformity interdependence and respect for authority, individualists' cultures values individual rights and freedoms as well as personal achievement and promotes self-expression and individual choice. These values are inculcated into the individual members of the society at an early age and as they grow up, their lifestyles are aligned to these specific values. They carry these into their adult lives and tend to hold them even when they join multi-cultured communities. The education systems under both individualist and collectivist cultures promote different skills and seek to achieve different goals. They can be influenced by the cultural values and norms of the society in which they exist. Education under individualist cultures focuses on fostering critical thinking and creativity and also emphasizes on personal development and unique talents (Saroglou, 2019). Under this culture, students are taught to look at issues with a more objective mind and how best they can develop themselves and become better people in the society and the extent to which they can effectively use their natural God given talents. These becomes their objectives when they go to school. Learning institutions that are established in these cultures also tend to reinforce them into the learning and expects students irrespective of their cultures to adopt and conform to these arrangements. Collectivist cultures on the other hand have education systems that stresses conformity and discipline and also emphasis on group learning and social skills.

Blended 'Indicollectivist' Culture:

Blended culture or 'Indicollectivist' culture is a new concept that results from the idea of blending the strengths of western individualism and eastern collectivism. It typically refers to the coming together of or integration of two different cultural elements, practices or influences to create a common ground for people from different cultures (Kei , 2020). This is possible to occur at both individual and societal level thereby resulting into a mix of traditions, customs and behaviors. Individual identify where people with diverse backgrounds or heritage often have a blended cultural identity. For example, someone born to parents from different countries may incorporate elements of both cultures into their identity. Blended culture usually has some potential benefits such as increased creativity, balanced individualism and collaborative problem-solving among others.

For international schools, blended culture is important because it allows the institutions to create a compromise culture that suits and encourages all students to work towards achieving their goals without necessarily losing their identity or feeling lost or left out (Tracy , 2016). Blended culture usually results from multicultural societies which includes international schools which have diverse populations that exhibits a culture that incorporates aspects of various ethnic, religious, or linguistic traditions. This culture helps in building strong school community since it creates a strong sense of community among students, parents and teachers. It also leads to

collaboration and mutual respect which contributes to a positive and including school environment.

Blended culture has been seen as the outcome of cultural exchange which exposes students to a global perspective. It provides the much-needed exposure to a diverse range of cultures and gives students more comprehensive understanding of the world (Grossmann, Huynh, & Ellsworth, 2016). Additionally, it fosters global perspective and helps students get a more comprehensive understanding the world. Increased globalization and interconnectedness have led to greater cultural change where individuals and communities may adopt practices, foods, fashion, or entertainment from other cultures, contributing to a blended cultural experience. This in turn prepares learners for global citizenship since the schools aims at preparing students with globalized world where both cross-cultural communication and collaboration are essential. It also allows students to develop the skills and international mindedness which are important for one to be a responsible citizen.

Advances in technology and communication have facilitated the sharing of ideas and cultures across borders. It exposes students to different cultures thereby enhancing their competence which is determined by their ability to interact and communicate with people from diverse backgrounds. Students also learn to navigate and appreciate the cultural difference and developing empathy and respect (Hafer, 2016). This has led to the blending of cultural influences on a global scale, with people around the world adopting and adapting elements from different traditions. In some cases, cultures come together and blend to create a new and distinct cultural identity. This can happen through intercultural marriages, artistic collaborations, or other forms of cross-cultural interaction. It is important to note that while blended culture can lead to rich diversity and creativity, it also raises questions about cultural appropriation, authenticity, and the potential for the erosion of traditional practices.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper underscores the transformative impact of globalization on global cultural dynamics. The interplay between Western individualistic culture and Eastern collectivist culture in international schools serves as a microcosm of the broader cultural shifts occurring worldwide. The juxtaposition of these contrasting cultural orientations within the educational setting highlights the challenges and opportunities inherent in fostering a harmonious and inclusive environment. Clearly, there is need for continuous efforts by international schools in breaking down cultural barriers, erecting bridges of understanding, and ultimately giving rise to a blended or 'Indicollectivist' culture. This emerging cultural paradigm is characterized by the integration of strengths from both Western individualism and Eastern collectivism, offering a potential framework for cultivating creativity, balanced individualism, and collaborative problem-solving. Moreover, the literature points to the importance of blended culture in preparing students for global citizenship, fostering cross-cultural communication skills, and promoting empathy and respect in an increasingly interconnected world.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge the nuanced challenges associated with blended culture, including questions of cultural appropriation and the potential erosion of traditional practices. As international schools play an important role in shaping the cultural landscape of future generations, careful consideration must be given to how these institutions navigate the delicate balance between cultural integration and the preservation of cultural authenticity. In essence, the evolving trends in global cultural dynamics demand a thoughtful and proactive approach in educational settings to ensure that the resulting 'Indicollectivist' culture is not only a product of global exchange but also a platform for mutual understanding, cooperation, and enriched diversity.

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