

# Educational Policy and Intercultural Communication: A Comparative Study of Central and Eastern European and East Asian Countries

Zhang Yanqing

*Affiliation: National University of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine*

## Accepted

2025-05-22

## Keywords

intercultural exchange,  
policy comparison,  
cultural diversity,  
international cooperation

## Corresponding Author

Zhang Yanqing

## Copyright 2025 by author(s)

This work is licensed under the  
CC BY 4.0



[doi.org/10.70693/itphss.v2i6.817](https://doi.org/10.70693/itphss.v2i6.817)

## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the role of education policy in promoting intercultural communication, to compare the similarities and differences between Central and Eastern Europe and East Asia in terms of the integration mechanisms of 'culture + education', and to reveal the trends of synergistic development between education and culture within higher education systems. Using a comparative research approach, the study selects Poland and Hungary (representing Central and Eastern Europe) and China and Japan (representing East Asia) as the subjects of analysis. It combines policy document analysis, literature review, and case studies to examine and compare educational objectives, curricula, and the development of platforms for international cooperation and cultural exchange. The findings indicate that Central and Eastern European countries emphasize strengthening European identity and protecting cultural diversity through education, whereas East Asian countries focus more on cultural export and the construction of an international image. The two regions differ in policy orientation, talent cultivation models, and mechanisms for international cooperation in the integration of education and culture. The study concludes that effective intercultural communication depends on systematic guidance and resource support from education policy. Both regions possess unique advantages in their respective integration paths, and future efforts should focus on enhancing cross-regional cooperation in education and culture to achieve complementarity and shared development.

## 1. Introduction

Against the background of the accelerating process of contemporary globalisation, intercultural communication has become important to competition and cooperation among countries. The ability of international dissemination of culture has been widely regarded as one of the core indicators of a country's level of soft power (Zamorano, 2016). At the same time, the cultural function of education policy, as a key path for institutional cultural production and dissemination, has received increasing attention from governments and researchers. Higher education, in particular, plays a function beyond the scope of traditional education in terms of cultural export, value dissemination, language promotion and identity construction, and has

become an important platform and mechanism for realising cultural communication strategies.

In the context of the profound adjustment of the global governance structure, the competition for cultural communication among countries is becoming increasingly fierce, and different countries have formed multiple strategic paths around how to achieve cultural communication and image construction through education (Drori et al., 2013). On the one hand, the 'knowledge-based soft power system' represented by Europe and the United States has established a wide range of influence in the global arena through the long-term construction of international education standards and academic exchange systems; on the other hand, emerging countries and regions are actively constructing their own culturally oriented education communication system to enhance their international status and strengthen their discourse power. On the other hand, emerging countries and regions are actively building their own culturally oriented educational communication systems to enhance their international status and strengthen their voice. Against this backdrop, the fusion mechanism of 'culture+education' has been proposed and widely practiced, which refers to the symbiosis between education and culture through the embedding of cultural content and dissemination mechanisms within the education system. This mechanism is not limited to adjustments in curricula or faculty structures, but is a deeper process of institutional integration involving the logic of educational governance, the structure of policy objectives, and the coordination of external cultural strategies. This integration not only changes the functional positioning of the education system but also reshapes the path dependence and output logic of cultural communication, gradually forming a paradigm of intercultural communication mediated by education policy.

In existing studies, the cultural functions of education policy are mainly reflected in the following aspects: first, the reproduction of national identity and values through foreign language education, cultural curricula and historical narratives (Meadows, 2020); second, the indirect transmission of culture through transnational higher education co-operation (Teichler, 2009); third, the exchange and re-construction of cultural experiences through international study abroad and the mobility of teachers (Nielsen, 2020); and the exchange and re-construction of cultural experiences through international study abroad and the mobility of teachers. International study abroad and teacher mobility to facilitate the exchange and reconstruction of cultural experiences (Rosenfeld et al., 2022). However, there is still insufficient research on the differences in the mechanisms through which educational policies promote intercultural communication in different regional cultural and political contexts, especially the lack of structural comparisons between non-Western countries or countries in transition.

Central and Eastern Europe and East Asian countries have had distinctive development paths in educational and cultural policies. Central and Eastern European countries have gone through the transition from planned to market economies, and after joining the European Union, their educational policies have been deeply influenced by the European integration process, emphasising the protection of cultural diversity, linguistic equality, and the construction of a European identity. To a certain extent, the educational and cultural policies of these countries are manifested in the institutionalisation of 'European values' and the participation in the construction of regional cultural governance structures through the education system (Jagielska-Burduk & Stec, 2019). For example, Poland and Hungary, while promoting the internationalisation of higher education, have also emphasised the institutional protection of minority cultures and languages to reconcile the diversity of cultural identities. In contrast, East Asian countries, such as China and Japan, have demonstrated a more state-driven strategy of cultural diffusion in their educational policies. In the process of internationalisation of education, these countries emphasise the dissemination of their own culture and the construction of an

international image, and the allocation of educational resources is closely aligned with national foreign strategies. For example, China has strengthened the position of education in its cultural communication system through the establishment of Confucius Institutes, scholarships for studying in China, and the Belt and Road Education Action Plan; Japan has strengthened the position of education in its cultural communication system through the Super Global University Programme, the Japanese Language Promotion Strategy, and so on. In Japan, through the ‘Super Global University Programme’, ‘Japanese Language Promotion Strategy’ and other multi-faceted policies, education and national cultural branding have been promoted in tandem. This policy orientation reflects the clear intention of East Asian countries to use education as a platform for shaping foreign cultural discourse (You, 2020).

In summary, although they are in different historical development tracks and political and cultural contexts respectively, both Central and Eastern Europe and East Asian countries are actively promoting the integration of education and cultural policies as an effective tool to participate in global cultural competition and cooperation. The similarities and differences between the two in terms of institutional design, policy objectives, cultural orientation, and means of dissemination form the basis of this comparative study.

To deeply understand the institutional logic and practical paths of educational policies in different regions in cultural communication, this paper proposes the following research questions:

1. What specific functions do educational policies play in promoting intercultural communication?
2. What are the structural differences between Central and Eastern Europe and East Asia in terms of ‘culture + education’ integration mechanisms?
3. How do different countries export culture and construct identity through their higher education systems?
4. how to build more effective educational and cultural synergies within the framework of global cultural diversity and regional cooperation?

To respond to the above questions, this paper adopts a comparative research methodology and selects four representative countries, namely Poland, Hungary (Central and Eastern Europe), China, and Japan (East Asia), as the samples for analysis. Combining the analysis of policy texts, literature review, and typical case studies, this paper conducts a comparative analysis of education policy in terms of the four dimensions of goal-setting, curricular structure, international cooperation mechanisms, and cultural dissemination paths. On this basis, the study identifies the institutional logic and practical effectiveness of educational policies in promoting cultural dissemination, and puts forward policy recommendations to promote the synergistic development of education and culture in the region

## **2. Review of theory and literature**

### **2.1 Basic theoretical perspectives of intercultural communication**

Intercultural communication refers to the process of exchanging information between individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds, focusing on how cultural differences influence understanding, interaction, and value construction (Durant & Shepherd, 2009). Foundational theories in this field focused on "cultural dimensional differences," among which Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions has been influential in explaining national communication patterns (Sercombe & Young, 2011). He classified cultural variation into six dimensions—such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and individualism vs. collectivism—which provided a systematic framework for analysing cross-cultural cognition and

behaviour.

Building on this foundation, the Cultural Adaptation Theory (CAT) emphasizes how individuals adjust in cross-cultural contexts (Anderson, 1994). It argues that intercultural communication involves not only the transfer of language and information but also the transformation of psychological structures, social norms, and identity perceptions.

In contemporary contexts, intercultural communication is increasingly institutionalized. It is no longer a purely organic or individual experience but a process deeply shaped by policy, particularly within educational systems. Scholars have highlighted that modern intercultural exchanges are governed by institutional arrangements—such as curriculum design, language policies, and internationalization strategies—thereby framing education as a tool of cultural governance (Banytė & Inčiūrienė, 2012).

These theories offer crucial analytical tools for understanding how education policies shape intercultural communication. As Xu (2013) argues, education systems today serve as institutionalized platforms for cultural transmission, driven not only by pedagogical goals but also by national ideologies and strategic objectives. Intercultural communication, therefore, becomes a form of structured interaction orchestrated by the "institutional export of culture."

## **2.2 The Cultural Function and Institutional Logic of Educational Policies**

Educational policy has traditionally been regarded as an institutional arrangement for planning and regulating national education systems. Its core objectives have included ensuring educational equity, improving quality control, and accumulating human capital (Radó, 2001). However, with the evolution of global governance, the cultural function of education policy has gained increasing scholarly and policy attention. Education is no longer seen merely as a tool for economic development but also as a central mechanism for shaping cultural values and identities.

Institutional logic refers to the underlying value systems, cultural beliefs, and normative frameworks that shape how institutions function and how decisions are made within them (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury, 2012). It provides a theoretical lens for understanding how broader societal norms are embedded in the formal rules, routines, and structures of organizations. In the context of education policy, institutional logic explains why certain cultural narratives, values, or identities are privileged over others, and how these priorities are reproduced through policy instruments such as curriculum design, resource allocation, language regulation, and teacher education.

Each national education system operates within a distinct institutional logic shaped by its historical, political, and cultural context. For example, Western European countries often emphasize liberal-democratic values, multiculturalism, and individual autonomy, whereas East Asian countries may focus more on national identity, collective discipline, and state-led modernization. These logics guide the strategic orientation of education policies, particularly in how culture is defined, preserved, or exported. By applying the framework of institutional logic, we can better understand how education becomes an instrument of cultural governance, serving not only developmental but also symbolic and ideological purposes. It reveals the implicit cultural agendas that drive educational reform and explains how education systems are mobilized to construct national identities and engage in international cultural diplomacy.

The theory of cultural reproduction offers another critical insight. It holds that education systems not only transmit knowledge but also maintain the cultural capital of dominant social groups, thereby reinforcing existing social power structures (Goldthorpe, 2007). When scaled to the national level, this theory suggests that education policy acts as a medium through which governments embed specific cultural values into institutional frameworks. By regulating the distribution of educational content and resources, policies establish and reproduce a cultural

hierarchy that aligns with national ideologies and political objectives.

In this way, education policy serves as both a reflector and projector of culture. Domestically, it shapes students' cultural cognition and value orientation through curriculum standards, textbook content, teacher training, and language policies. Internationally, the internationalization of higher education becomes a strategic tool for soft power projection. Through transnational academic exchanges, overseas campuses, and language promotion initiatives, education contributes directly to national cultural diplomacy and the construction of a global image.

Dolby and Rahman (2008) describe these activities as examples of soft cultural expansion, especially significant for non-English-speaking countries seeking to assert their cultural sovereignty on the global stage. In East Asia, this phenomenon is particularly evident: education policies are frequently aligned with broader cultural strategies aimed at global brand-building, such as China's Confucius Institutes or Japan's "Cool Japan" initiative. These efforts reflect how education policy has evolved from a traditional pedagogical orientation into a multidimensional instrument of cultural strategy and global influence.

### **2.3 Conceptual definition and application path of 'culture + education' synergistic mechanism**

The 'culture+education' synergy mechanism refers to the institutionalisation of the goal of cultural dissemination into the education system during the process of education policy formulation and implementation, to achieve the synergy of the dual goals of culture and education through the allocation of education resources, curriculum content adjustment, teacher capacity building and international cooperation mechanisms, etc. This mechanism is mainly reflected at two levels. This mechanism is mainly reflected at two levels:

(1) Cultural embedding within the domestic education system, such as fostering students' national cultural identity by strengthening the curriculum of national history, tradition, and language;

(2) Cultural export in the process of opening up education to the outside world, for example, through international student programmes, bilingual teaching, overseas schooling, and other forms of cultural dissemination to achieve externalisation.

The 'culture+education' mechanism in Central and Eastern European countries is mostly based on multilingualism and cultural diversity policies, and emphasises cultural preservation and identity construction, while the relevant mechanism in East Asian countries focuses more on cultural promotion, brand building and strategic communication (Lee & Lim, 2014). Despite the significant differences in the paths taken, they both reflect the expansion of education policy from a traditional pedagogical orientation to a cultural strategic orientation.

Currently, systematic research on the synergistic mechanisms of 'culture + education' is still in its infancy, and most of the existing literature focuses on analyses of education and cultural policies in individual countries, or specific measures (e.g., Confucius Institutes, Japanese-language promotion, and the European Union's Erasmus programme, etc.), but there is a lack of comparative research at the cross-regional and institutional levels (Ranta et al., 2018). Therefore, it is necessary to construct a comprehensive analytical framework centred on educational policies and covering national cultural strategies and institutional logics to systematically compare the paths of educational and cultural integration among different countries.

### **2.4 Review of Research on Educational and Cultural Policies in Central and Eastern European and East Asian Countries**

Regarding the research on the educational and cultural policies of Central and Eastern European countries, academics have mainly focused on their interaction with the cultural policies

of the European Union (EU). (Stroligo, 2024) points out that the EU's cultural governance emphasises the unity of cultural diversity and cultural consensus, and promotes the member states to build a mechanism for multilingualism, multicultural curricula, and identity education in the field of education. After joining the EU, Poland and Hungary have generally embedded the issue of 'European cultural identity' in their higher education reforms, emphasising the educational translation of European values (Béres et al., 2025).

On the other hand, research in East Asian countries mostly emphasises the role of education in cultural diplomacy and national image construction, and (Ang et al., 2018) analyses how the Japanese government synergises the development of the cultural and creative industries with the education system through the 'Cool Japan' strategy, and builds an integrated 'education-culture-brand' system. (Wang, 2017) systematically analyses the characteristics of 'institutional cultural export' in the internationalization of China's higher education, pointing out that education has become one of the core cultural communication tools in the 'Belt and Road' strategy. One of the means of cultural dissemination is education, which has become one of the core tools of the 'Belt and Road' strategy.

Although existing studies have provided rich analyses of country experiences, the following shortcomings exist:

(1) the lack of comparative perspectives, and the differences and similarities between the educational and cultural policies of Central and Eastern Europe and East Asia have not yet been systematically explored at the structural level;

(2) the theoretical analyses are weak, and a mature analytical framework has not yet been formed to explain the cultural and political logic behind the systemic differences;

(3) the institutional mechanism of the synergistic mechanism of 'culture+education' has not yet been developed.

(4) The mechanism of 'culture+education' synergy has not been sufficiently researched, and there is an urgent need to deepen the understanding through the comparative method.

The synergistic mechanism of 'culture+education', as the core object of analysis in this study, carries the research logic of institutional comparison and path differences. Based on the research on Central and Eastern Europe and East Asia, this paper proposes to adopt a comparative research method to analyse the similarities and differences between the two types of regions in terms of embedding the function of cultural dissemination in education policy, focusing on the dimensions of policy objectives, curriculum arrangements, and international cooperation mechanisms, to provide theoretical basis and practical inspiration for the protection of global cultural diversity and regional cooperation in education.

### **3. Research Design and Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Methodology: Comparative Analysis and Case Study Combination**

This study adopts the research strategy of combining comparative analysis and case study to explore the institutional arrangements and practical paths of educational policies in cross-cultural communication in Central and Eastern Europe and East Asia. Comparative analysis, as a research method that systematically identifies similarities and differences between two or more units, is widely used in the field of cross-national policy research and comparison of educational systems (Hantrais, 1999). Its advantage is that it can reveal the different institutional logics, policy paths, and implementation mechanisms adopted by different countries under similar functional objectives.

Considering the high degree of institutional dependence and contextual embeddedness of educational policies and cultural communication, it is difficult to capture their cultural connotations and political intentions by purely quantitative methods. Therefore, this paper introduces a case study approach to analyse the performance of selected countries in specific policy practices. Through a combination of vertical tracing and horizontal comparison, the correlation between institutional context, policy logic, and cultural communication paths is strengthened and analysed.

### **3.2 Notes on the selection of country samples**

To ensure the comparability of regional representativeness and policy differentiation, four countries, Poland, Hungary (representative of Central and Eastern Europe), and China and Japan (representative of East Asia), are selected as research subjects in this paper. The selection criteria are as follows:

Regional representativeness: Poland and Hungary are EU member states in the CEE region, and their education policies are deeply influenced by the EU's cultural governance structure; China and Japan are major countries in the East Asian region with more mature education internationalisation strategies.

Political system differentiation: the four countries represent different political and economic systems (transitional democracies, state-dominated systems, developed capitalist systems), which helps to identify differences in institutional paths.

Educational and cultural policy activism: All four countries have embedded the goal of cultural diffusion in their educational policies and have implemented a series of institutional initiatives in terms of curricula, co-operation mechanisms, and language promotion, which make for good case studies.

The data used in this study come from the following sources:

Official policy documents and laws, and regulations: These include documents on higher education reforms, strategic plans for cultural communication, and language policy guidelines issued by ministries of education in various countries.

International organisations: data on education and culture issued by the European Commission, UNESCO, OECD, etc.

Academic journals and research reports: authoritative literature covering the fields of education policy, cultural studies, and intercultural communication;

### **3.3 Research dimensions**

To systematically analyse the path of educational policy in cross-cultural communication, this paper constructs four main dimensions of analysis based on an extensive literature review, which focus on four aspects, namely, policy goal setting, curriculum content design, international exchange mechanism, and cultural communication practice.

#### **3.3.1 Policy Objectives**

This dimension focuses on whether the objectives of cultural communication are explicitly embodied in the educational policies of each country, and whether they are oriented towards cultural identity construction, cultural export, cultural inclusion, or as part of the national soft power strategy. The analysis identifies explicit and implicit objectives of the cultural function through the frequency of keywords in the policy text, the strategic context and the form of expression of the objectives.

#### **3.3.2 Curriculum Design**

Curriculum design directly reflects the institutional expression of cultural values within the education system. This paper will examine the number, type, and proportion of culture-related courses (e.g., history, language, traditional culture, intercultural communication, etc.) in each

country's higher education system, and will focus on whether they match international communication goals. For example, whether Central and Eastern European countries have introduced European Union culture courses, and whether East Asian countries have strengthened the English teaching system of their cultural contents.

### 3.3.3 Mechanisms of International Exchange (MIE)

This dimension covers bilateral/multilateral academic co-operation, student and teacher mobility, overseas joint schooling, international student policies, etc., reflecting the institutional channels and communication pathways carried by the education system in transnational cultural communication. Special attention is paid to institutional arrangements for 'educational diplomacy', such as the Confucius Institute, the Erasmus Project, and the Super Global University Programme.

### 3.3.4 Cultural Transmission in Practice

This dimension emphasises the practical implementation of the education system's external communication activities, including school publicity, overseas cultural festivals, cultural and creative courses, and cultural brand promotion. Qualitative cases are used to compare and contrast the specific ways in which education and culture work together in different countries, as well as the effectiveness of the feedback from the outside world.

Through the cross-analysis of the above four dimensions, this paper constructs the following comparative analysis framework:

Table 1: Comparative Analysis Framework

Analysis Dimensions	Indicator Category	Data Source
Policy objectives	Statement of cultural communication goals and national strategic embedding	Policy documents, government reports
Course Design	Proportion of cultural courses and arrangement of language courses	College teaching plans and curriculum standards of the Ministry of Education
International exchange mechanism	Number of cooperation projects, flow scale, institutional network	UNESCO/OECD, inter-school agreements
Cultural Communication Practice	External cultural activities, publicity methods, and audience feedback	Case school annual reports, news media reports, etc.

## 4. Comparative Analysis of Intercultural Communication Pathways in



## **Educational Policies in Central and Eastern European and East Asian Countries**

### **4.1 The logic of cultural embedding in policy objectives**

The way and extent to which cultural communication is embedded in education policy reflect the strategic positioning and cultural-political orientation of different countries.

Poland and Hungary, as members of the European Union (EU), have cultural objectives in their education policies, which are mainly expressed as a response to the protection of cultural diversity and the construction of European identity. Poland's National Strategy for the Development of Education (2013-2020) explicitly points out that the education system should be strengthened with education on European culture, language, and history, to enhance young people's recognition of the 'values of the European Community'. In addition, the Polish Ministry of Education actively cooperates with the EU Framework Policy on Linguistic Diversity, supporting multilingualism and the system of mutual recognition of cross-border curricula.

In Hungary, national cultural identity and historical continuity are emphasised in policies such as the National Public Education Act (2011), which stipulates that schools at all levels should include 'education in national heritage and linguistic traditions' as part of the basic curriculum, emphasising the reproduction of national culture. At the same time, however, Hungary also encourages participation in regional cultural exchanges through the 'Visegrad+' cultural and educational cooperation mechanism, demonstrating a policy orientation that places equal emphasis on cultural preservation and cultural cooperation.

In contrast, the education policies of China and Japan are characterised by a more state-led approach to cultural dissemination. China has proposed in the Outline of the National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) to 'strengthen the building of Chinese culture dissemination capacity', and in the Belt and Road Education Initiative, education and internationalisation are explicitly regarded as a way to enhance the country's cultural soft power. In the Belt and Road Education Initiative, internationalisation is explicitly considered an important tool for enhancing the country's cultural soft power. Relevant documents such as the 'Educational Action to Promote the Construction of the "Belt and Road" (2016)' have systematically deployed policy paths such as language promotion, study in China, and export of cultural programmes (Clarke, 2018).

Japan has institutionalised the internationalisation of education as a 'cultural strategy tool'. The Third Basic Plan for Educational Promotion (2018) explicitly proposes to 'enhance the country's cultural influence on foreign countries through higher education' (Kim, 2016). The 'Super Global University Plan' led by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), for example, encourages universities to strengthen English-language courses, set up centres for the study of Japanese culture, and attract foreign students, to enhance the international influence of 'Japanese-style education'.

In sum, there are obvious differences in the embedding of cultural functions in the goals of education policy: Central and Eastern European countries adopt a 'culture-protecting' logic, which serves identity construction and regional integration; while East Asian countries are more inclined to a 'culture-exporting' logic, which is oriented towards enhancing the international influence and shaping the cultural authority of the country. East Asian countries, on the other hand, are more oriented towards the logic of 'cultural export', which is oriented towards enhancing the country's international influence and shaping cultural authority.

### **4.2 Curriculum design and integration of cultural content**

Curriculum design is the area of the education system that most directly reflects the intention of cultural transmission. In terms of curriculum design, the approaches of the four countries reflect both institutional dependence and differences in their foreign cultural communication strategies.

Courses on European integration, such as ‘History of European culture’, ‘European legal system’ and ‘Intercultural communication in a multilingual society’ are widely offered in Polish universities. At the same time, the promotion of the CLIL system in universities has made it possible to use cultural programmes not only as a language teaching tool, but also as a tool for the construction of cultural identity. For example, the University of Warsaw and the University of Krakow have set up courses on Eastern European languages and minority cultures in their curricula, demonstrating the concept of culturally inclusive education.

Hungary has given more prominence to the centrality of its own culture in its curricula. For example, the University of Budapest and the University of Szeged have set up the ‘Centre for the Study of Hungarian History and Culture’, which offers general education courses with Hungarian literature, folklore, and religion as the core contents. Their educational content reinforces the construction of the continuity of national history, but they lag in the development of external programmes, and the degree of institutionalisation of international cultural dissemination is limited.

East Asian countries, on the other hand, have adopted the path of ‘internationalisation of cultural programmes’ to strengthen the English-language dissemination capacity of their cultures. Under the guidance of the ‘Double First Class’ construction and the ‘Belt and Road’ policy, Chinese universities have generally increased the number of ‘Introduction to Chinese Culture’ and ‘Intercultural Communication’ courses, and have promoted the development of ‘Intercultural Communication’ and ‘Intercultural Communication’ courses. The courses of ‘Introduction to Chinese Culture’ and ‘Intercultural Communication’ have been generally increased, and bilingual teaching in Chinese and English has been promoted. Fudan University, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Xiamen University, and other colleges and universities offer a wide range of customised cultural courses for international students, which have become an important medium for foreign cultural export.

Japanese universities have embodied the integration strategy of ‘culture + creativity’ in their curriculum systems. The University of Tokyo, Waseda University, and other famous universities have set up ‘Japanese social and cultural courses’, covering tea ceremony, architectural aesthetics, popular culture, and so on, as an important feature of attracting overseas students. By combining traditional culture with contemporary culture, Japan has built a cultural programme system that is both academic and communicative.

Generally speaking, Central and Eastern European countries emphasise the historical and political identity function of cultural contents, and their curriculum systems aim at ‘identity reinforcement’, while East Asian countries use ‘external dissemination’ as the logic, highlighting the packaging and international disseminability of cultural contents.

### **4.3 System Construction of International Exchange Mechanism**

The international exchange mechanism plays a channelised and institutionalised role in promoting the dissemination of education and culture, and is a key supporting element of the synergistic system of ‘culture + education’.

Central and Eastern European countries have extensively participated in educational exchange mechanisms under the framework of the European Union, such as Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, CEEPUS, and other programmes. The Polish Ministry of Education and the European Union Education Foundation jointly set up the ‘Central European Cultural Mobility Programme’, with student mobility and teacher exchange as the core mechanisms to enhance cultural understanding

and dissemination. Hungary promotes cultural research cooperation between universities in Central and Eastern Europe within the framework of the Visegrad Scholarship Programme. Despite its limited degree of internationalisation, Hungary has frequent regional exchanges and has built a 'near-regional network for cultural dissemination'. The Chinese international education system is highly nationalised.

China's international education mechanisms are highly nationalised. The Confucius Institutes system, led by Hanban (now renamed China Centre for Foreign Language Cooperation in Education), has set up branches in more than 160 countries around the world, and has become the largest national platform for language and cultural dissemination. At the same time, the policy of studying in China has been institutionalised, and the Silk Road Scholarship Programme has explicitly included 'cultural understanding' as an assessment criterion. Colleges and universities have set up 'international education colleges' and 'China programme offices' to achieve synergy between the policy and institutional levels.

In Japan, through national programmes such as the Top Global University Project, colleges and universities are being encouraged to increase the proportion of international courses, implement multilingual admission policies, and set up Japanese-language institutions and co-operation centres overseas. This mechanism emphasises institutional flexibility and educational flexibility. This mechanism emphasises institutional flexibility and education brand building, reflecting its strategic orientation of 'cultural diplomacy'.

In summary, Central and Eastern European countries rely more on regional institutional platforms to promote cultural exchanges, and their international communication paths are more indirect; while East Asian countries have adopted a centrally-driven mechanism to promote the full development of education's foreign cultural functions by pooling resources.

#### **4.4 Cultural Communication Practices and Operation Paths**

Apart from policy texts and institutional design, the effectiveness of cultural communication also depends on the operational mechanisms and external feedback at the practical level.

Poland has set up 'multicultural festivals', language days, lectures on European culture and other activities in universities, which emphasise the mechanism of cultural contact at the level of daily communication. For example, the Technical University of Kraków organises the 'Forum of Eastern European Cultures' every year, inviting students from many countries to present their national cultures and creating a field of cultural exchange. Hungarian universities carry out activities to reproduce traditional music and religious festivals, emphasising the depth and ceremonial nature of the national cultural experience, and the purity of cultural expression despite the limited scope of dissemination.

China has opened Chinese culture festivals and Chinese Bridge competitions in overseas universities, with cultural communication activities covering language, performance, calligraphy, festivals, and other dimensions, with a high degree of operational standardisation and institutional support. In addition, the 'Chinese + Vocational Skills' training programme and the internship programme in China have also expanded the combination of cultural communication and vocational education.

Japanese cultural communication practices are characterised by the linkage between creative industries and the education system. For example, the 'Cool Japan' campaign is funded by the government to support universities to carry out cross-cultural activities such as animation, design, Japanese food and fashion, and the autonomy and diversity of cultural activities are achieved through multiple bodies such as university associations and foreign students' joint organisations.

## 5. Discussion and Policy Implications

### 5.1 Major Findings

From the perspective of the synergy mechanism of ‘culture + education’, this paper systematically compares and analyses the functional positioning, institutional path, and practical operation of education policies in cross-cultural communication in Central and Eastern Europe and East Asia. At the theoretical level, the study integrates the theory of intercultural communication, the theory of the institutional function of education policy, and the literature on cultural governance, and constructs an analytical framework centred on policy objectives, curriculum design, international mechanisms, and practical paths. At the empirical level, the paper identifies the following key findings using Poland, Hungary, China, and Japan as case countries:

First, education policies in different countries reflect significant differences in cultural functional goal setting. Central and Eastern European countries emphasise cultural protection and identity construction, and educational policies serve the maintenance of internal cultural diversity and regional cultural integration; whereas East Asian countries place more emphasis on the strategic function of the education system for the dissemination of culture to the outside world, with a clear orientation, especially in the enhancement of the country's soft power and the construction of the right to cultural discourse.

Secondly, the degree of cultural embedding in the curriculum system and the direction of dissemination are systematically differentiated. The curricula of Central and Eastern European countries highlight the depth of history and multilingual education, and emphasize the cohesive function of cultural identity; while East Asian countries optimize the dissemination function of cultural content through bilingual education, culturally oriented curricula, and customized cultural projects, highlighting the ‘culture exporting’ curricular structure.

Thirdly, there are structural differences in the way international exchange mechanisms are built. Central and Eastern European countries rely extensively on regional platforms (e.g. EU Erasmus, V4 cooperation mechanism) to carry out cultural and educational cooperation, and the mode of dissemination is based on ‘horizontal cooperation’, while East Asian countries achieve the integrated operation of education and cultural dissemination through state-led outward-oriented mechanisms (e.g. Confucius Institutes, Super-Global University programmes), with emphasis on institutional coordination and resource concentration. The emphasis is on institutional coordination and resource pooling.

Fourthly, the practical paths of cultural dissemination reflect different institutional flexibility and dissemination strategies. In Central and Eastern European countries, cultural dissemination is mostly carried out through university cultural festivals, student organisations and cross-border projects to achieve ‘regional and endogenous’ cultural sharing, while in East Asian countries, cultural branding projects, creative content platforms and national project support are used to achieve ‘global and diversified’ cultural export strategies. East Asian countries, on the other hand, have realised a ‘global and diversified’ cultural export strategy through cultural brand projects, creative content platforms, and national project support.

To sum up, education policy as an institutional cultural dissemination platform, its cultural function shows strong national dependence and institutional embeddedness. Although both Central and Eastern Europe and East Asian countries attach importance to the synergistic development of education and culture in terms of macro-objectives, they have formed a differentiated pattern in terms of institutional logic, cultural orientation, and operational mechanism in terms of specific realisation paths.

## 5.2 Theoretical significance and practical inspiration

From the theoretical level, this paper expands the dimension of cultural function in education policy research, and verifies the institutional applicability of the synergistic mechanism of 'culture + education' in cross-cultural communication. Existing research on education policy focuses on equity, quality control, and human capital accumulation, but less on its cultural reproduction function. Through cross-regional comparative analyses, this paper can help to fill the gap of institutional research on the function of cultural reproduction in education policy, and can also provide a complementary perspective on the education system for the study of cultural governance and global communication.

From a practical point of view, the findings of this paper provide the following insights for the formulation of cultural integration policies in education:

Educational policies should clearly define the functional position of cultural communication. Whether as a means of cultural identity construction or as a tool for national cultural diplomacy, educational policies should clearly define the cultural objectives in the institutional documents, and establish a corresponding evaluation index system and resource allocation mechanism.

Optimising the design of cultural content in the curriculum should shift the cultural curriculum from the marginal status of 'soft curriculum' to the mainstream education system, and strengthen its institutional expression through multilingual teaching, integration of cultural modules, and interdisciplinary construction. Curricula should serve both the functions of national cultural heritage and external communication.

It is recommended that East Asian countries further strengthen the 'education-culture' cross-platform coordination mechanism to enhance the diversity and self-organisation of the communication network; Central and Eastern European countries can strengthen bilateral cultural and educational agreements based on the EU platform, to enhance the initiative and policy independence of cultural communication.

To enhance institutional support and diversified participation in cultural communication practice, countries can stimulate the subjectivity of universities and cultural institutions in international communication by setting up special funds, promoting successful cases, and supporting the construction of cultural brands in universities. At the same time, student organisations, alumni associations, and overseas school sites should be encouraged to participate in cultural exchanges and expand the dimension of communication.

## 6. Conclusion

In today's increasingly frequent global cultural interactions, education policy is no longer just a technical design of the knowledge system and talent system, but its cultural function is gradually becoming an important part of the country's participation in global governance and cultural competition. The differentiated practices of Central and Eastern Europe and East Asia in terms of cultural policy objectives, institutional tools, and dissemination strategies show that the cultural function of the education system is highly system-dependent and regional path-dependent. How to build a complementary, open, and inclusive educational and cultural synergy mechanism in the background of institutional differences will be an important issue for global educational and cultural cooperation in the future. This paper attempts to provide theoretical support and empirical reference for this issue, and we look forward to deepening it in subsequent studies.

## References

- Anderson, L. E. (1994). A new look at an old construct: Cross-cultural adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 18(3), 293–328.
- Ang, I., Isar, Y. R., & Mar, P. (2018). Cultural diplomacy: beyond the national interest?. In *Cultural Diplomacy: Beyond the National Interest?* (pp. 11-27). Routledge.
- Banytė, I., & Inčiūrienė, R. (2012). Intercultural Communication in Higher Education Institutions. *Language in Different Contexts/Kalba ir Kontekstai*, 5(1).
- Béres, A., Hont, Z., & Molnár-Kovács, Z. (2025). The European dimension in education in Hungarian primary school geography textbooks. *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education*, 14788047251318025.
- Clarke, M. (2018). The belt and road initiative: Exploring Beijing's motivations and challenges for its new silk road. *Strategic Analysis*, 42(2), 84–102.
- Dolby, N., & Rahman, A. (2008). Research in International Education. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(3), 676–726.
- Drori, G. S., Delmestri, G., & Oberg, A. (2013). Branding the university: Relational strategy of identity construction in a competitive field. *Trust in Higher Education Institutions*, 86, 134–147.
- Durant, A., & Shepherd, I. (2009). 'Culture' and 'Communication' in Intercultural Communication. *European Journal of English Studies*, 13(2), 147–162.
- Hantrais, L. (1999). Contextualization in cross-national comparative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 2(2), 93–108.
- Jagielska-Burduk, A., & Stec, P. (2019). Council of Europe cultural heritage and education policy: Preserving identity and searching for a common core? *Revista Electrónica Interuniversitaria de Formación Del Profesorado*, 22(1).
- John H. Goldthorpe. (2007). "Cultural Capital": Some Critical Observations. *Sociologica*, 2, 0–0.
- Kim, T. (2016). Internationalisation and development in East Asian higher education: An introduction. In *Comparative education* (Vol. 52, Issue 1, pp. 1–7). Taylor & Francis.
- Lee, H.-K., & Lim, L. (2014). Cultural policies in East Asia: An introduction. In *Cultural policies in East Asia: Dynamics between the state, arts and creative industries* (pp. 1–14). Springer.
- Meadows, B. (2020). Nationalism, nationalized cultures, and English Language Teaching (ELT): What teacher interviews reveal about culture teaching as vehicle for ideological reproduction/transformation. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 17(3), 143–165.
- Nielsen, N. (2020). *The erasmus learning journey: Students' experiences from a mobility period Abroad* [PhD Thesis, Department of Education, Stockholm University].
- Radó, P. (2001). *Transition in Education: Policy Making and the Key Educational Policy Areas in the Central-European and Baltic Countries*.

Ranta, V., Aarikka-Stenroos, L., Ritala, P., & Mäkinen, S. J. (2018). Exploring institutional drivers and barriers of the circular economy: A cross-regional comparison of China, the US, and Europe. *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, 135, 70–82.

Rosenfeld, I., Yemini, M., & Mamlok, D. (2022). Agency and professional identity among mobile teachers: How does the experience of teaching abroad shape teachers' professional identity *Teachers and Teaching*, 28(6), 668–689.

Sercombe, P., & Young, T. (2011). Culture and cognition in the study of intercultural communication. In *Language and bilingual cognition* (pp. 543–556). Psychology Press.

Stroligo, S. (2024). *The role of European Cultural Policy in advancing a Transnational culture: The case study of the European Institute of Cultural Routes*.

Teichler, U. (2009). Internationalisation of higher education: European experiences. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 10(1), 93–106.

Wang, J. (2017). The research of language communication education strategy: The Belt and Road background. *2017 4th International Conference on Education, Management and Computing Technology (ICEMCT 2017)*, 23–26.

Xu, K. (2013). Theorizing Difference in Intercultural Communication: A Critical Dialogic Perspective. *Communication Monographs*, 80(3), 379–397.

You, Y. (2020). The 'new Orientalism': Education policy borrowing and representations of East Asia. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 50(5), 742–763.

Zamorano, M. M. (2016). Reframing cultural diplomacy: The instrumentalization of culture under the soft power theory. *Culture Unbound*, 8(2), 165–186.)