



# Exploring Self-efficacy, Cultural Responsiveness, and Emotional Intelligence for Student Achievement at the Tertiary Education Level in China and the United Kingdom: A College Student Perception

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**Abstract.** Self-efficacy, along with cultural responsiveness and emotional intelligence, is a practical approach for students to achieve their learning goals and build their lifelong learning. However, Chinese tertiary education neglects the importance of self-efficacy, cultural responsiveness, and emotional intelligence. This study explores the Chinese college students' experiences and perceptions of how tertiary education fosters their self-efficacy, cultural responsiveness, and emotional intelligence for their academic performance and lifelong learning. Specifically, this study compares the similarities and differences in tertiary education in China and the United Kingdom. They foster students' self-efficacy for their academic performance and deal with their higher pressure, anxiety, and failure in learning outcomes. This study also analyses the students' perceptions on how they respond to the cultural differences in China and the United Kingdom for their educational barriers and expectations in understanding the educational contextual meaning in learning and life. Additionally, this study describes the importance and relationship between emotional intelligence and student achievement contextually in tertiary education in China and the United Kingdom to build a positive and supportive social relation linking with the multicultural contexts in both countries. Therefore, the mixed research study addresses how Chinese students in mainland China and the United Kingdom to foster student self-efficacy in creating a supportive school culture for lifelong student integrity in the high-power and low-power distance higher education contexts in China and the United Kingdom.

**Keywords:** self-efficacy · cultural responsiveness · emotional intelligence · tertiary education · China · the UK

## 1 Introduction

Students need to do their homework well with the increasing demands and challenges of the international community and multi-cultures [1]. They need to have the inherent capacity to cope with difficulties in study and work. Faced with problems and challenges,

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some students may run away because studies show that many students with excellent grades still have problems in actual work situations [2]. They do not believe that they can deal with the dilemma at work. The reason for this is that, over the years, Chinese education has paid too much attention to students' grades and external performance when cultivating them [3]. This method can lead to most students having good grades. Still, at the same time, they have shallow confidence, poor reaction ability in a multicultural environment, and emotional intelligence also needs to be improved. On the other hand, British students were more confident in their abilities in most situations [4]. They can react quickly in different language environments and have better emotional control when faced with challenging tasks.

Due to the current situation in China, colleges and universities do not pay enough attention to cultivating students' self-confidence, intercultural communication, emotional management, and other aspects, resulting in the poor performance of most students in these aspects [5]. However, these capabilities are in great demand in all areas of life because these abilities are necessary for both people's study and work. As a result, from students' perspective, all colleges and universities should focus on cultivating students' abilities in three aspects: 1. Self-efficacy; 2. Cultural responsiveness; 3. Emotional intelligence.

Therefore, this paper will study three aspects of self-efficacy, intercultural communication, and emotional intelligence based on this situation. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's guess and judgment about his ability to complete a particular behaviour. It is "the degree to which people are confident in using their acquired skills to perform work behaviours [6]." Intercultural communication refers to the communicative ability between native speakers and non-native speakers and between people with different languages and cultural backgrounds [7]. Emotion management refers to the cultivation of the ability to control emotions by studying individuals and groups' understanding of their own emotions and the emotions of others to produce sound management effects [8]. Specifically, this study explores the relationship between self-efficacy, cultural responsiveness, and emotional intelligence cultivated by Chinese and British universities and their student's academic achievement under the multicultural contextualization within Chinese college student perceptions. In this article, I mainly discuss three parts below.

## **2 The Relationship Between Self-efficacy and Academic Performance**

### **2.1 The Importance of Students' Self-efficacy to Their Performance**

Self-efficacy is a significant indicator for students to achieve their learning goals and could face their life challenges [9]. It could define as the degree of confidence that people have to use the skills they have mastered to complete the work behaviour. That is why cultivating students to improve their self-confidence is helpful to build strong perseverance and improve interpersonal skills and the competence to adapt to changes. Since confidence is a psychological trait that reflects an individual's belief in completing an activity, it is a self-conscious characteristic and psychological state that can actively and effectively express students' self-worth, self-esteem, and self-understanding [10].

Consequently, the individual confidence traits affect personnel in their performance in learning, competition, employment, achievement, and other aspects.

Confidence is also a concept of daily life performance [11]. For example, the closest thing to confidence is the concept of self-efficacy proposed by Bandura in social learning theory [12]. It can help students face learning challenges and be determined to overcome difficulties. It can also help students improve resilience and even exceed the normal performance in their expected study [13]. Therefore, self-efficacy plays a crucial role in cultivating students' abilities. Each of us has things we want to accomplish, change, and achieve, and self-efficacy plays an essential role in this process. Students with high self-efficacy are more interested in their goals and activities and are more likely to be fully involved. These people recover more quickly from setbacks and failures, are more likely to blame failure on lack of effort and find new solutions by redoubling their efforts. In contrast, people with low self-efficacy see difficulties as threats to avoid; They are also more sensitive to adverse outcomes and more likely to lose confidence in their abilities after a failure [14]. Therefore, efficacy is a key for students to achieve their learning and life goal, which need to be cultivated by the university pedagogically.

## 2.2 Differences in the Cultivation of Self-efficacy Between China and the UK

To better study this topic, it is necessary to study the differences between cultivating students' self-efficacy in China and the UK. When universities develop students' sense of self-efficacy, they often try to motivate students to improve their confidence by themselves [15]. For example, both college students in China and the UK were encouraged to discover their strengths and weaknesses and accept them [16]. Undoubtedly, although universities have implemented some measures to improve students' self-confidence, they still need to consider whether these measures substantially impact their practical application process [17]. As a result, universities monitor their progress in the learning process. For example, universities use internships to evaluate students' learning outcomes.

In China, students develop their confidence influenced by Confucianism, which emphasizes modesty and comity [18]. This viewing is because China's geographical position determines that China is an agricultural society, leading to a farming culture. This culture is the fertile soil of group-based thought, rooted in their heart while building their confidence [19]. This viewing indicated that students pay attention to their relationships because they need cooperation and support in collective work. So, it all involves humility, and modesty has been an essential requirement and moral level since ancient times.

However, Britain is a mercantilist society throughout the UK, a hotbed of individualism [20]. Influenced by ancient Greek philosophy, people in Britain pursued equality, freedom, and independence, so the value orientation of British culture is individualism [21]. Uniqueness is a political, ethical, and social philosophy emphasizing individual liberty, interests, and self-domination. These viewings impact their life value and develop their confidence in their individuality. As a kind of value system, individualism asserts that all values are centred on the individual because the individual themselves has the highest value: as one kind of the political, economic, social, and religious behaviour of the general attitude, it includes highly personal confidence, personal life, and respect for the individual, against the authority and all kinds of domination over the individuals [22].

The British pursued freedom, and they valued individual rights and independence. They believe that respecting the right to personal freedom is a kind of politeness, and their refinement emphasizes equality and cooperation between them. Specifically, western society has always emphasized individual and individual values.

Consequently, the British culture has fostered students' confidence and recognition of their abilities, especially pride in personal achievements [23]. Often in the field of work or to show their talents, British students never hide their cadence, honour, and happiness after success, and they dare to accept people's praise but also dare to accept their imperfections. Thus, the difference in the cultivation of self-efficacy between Chinese and British universities is to understand the cultural difference and educational contextual consideration in the high-power distance Chinese culture and the democratic school culture for students to develop their efficacy.

### **2.3 Understanding and Expression of Self-efficacy in Higher Education in China and the UK**

Since it is essential to explore the differences in understanding self-efficacy between China and the UK, representing self-efficacy in higher education needs to be explored and defined [24]. Chinese education tends to emphasize students' performance compared with the cultivation of self-efficacy. Therefore, due to the long-term focus on student performance, most students with high-sky test grades will show their inferiority complex on the stage because these students deny themselves on a long-term basis.

In the UK, however, the core values of building confidence and lifelong learning are emphasized by both school education and the ethos of society [25]. Emerson said, "One should learn to catch and observe the light that shines within oneself, not the light of poets and great men. People should not throw away their thoughts without thinking because those are their thoughts [26]." Emerson preaches the importance of independence and self-confidence. In college, they have to do it effectively. Thus, confidence can be transmitted and generally accepted under any circumstances because it is consistent with British history and culture. Due to the differences in the understanding and presentation of self-efficacy in China and the UK, testing students' performance in different cultural backgrounds in the two countries is necessary.

### **2.4 Exploring the Relationship Between Students' Work Performance and Self-efficacy in China and the UK**

Self-efficacy should be reflected in the learning process and become a required course for students to apply the knowledge they have learned [27]. This viewing explores students' self-efficacy, which is the most direct method to measure students' competence. For example, overconfidence in listed companies in China positively impacts corporate performance [28]. It will make them optimistic about enterprise performance. This approach ultimately improves enterprise performance, which could apply to students in developing their confidence for study, work, and life. If students are very confident about their internship work, it can improve work effectiveness and performance. Performance is closely related to confidence, but it is only one indicator of teaching outcomes. For example, if we only pay attention to rich education (external grades) without laying

emphasis on the comprehensive development of students, it will only cultivate learning machines and students' creativity. The main factors affecting self-efficacy are individual behaviour's success or failure experience.

Thus, the source of self-efficacy information has the most significant influence on self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is a measure of a person's quality of confidence. Socrates once said, "If a person wants to achieve anything, he must have self-esteem and self-confidence [29]." It is the eternal beacon of success and is the inexhaustible power of progress. It is also a measure of a person's quality of confidence. Socrates once said, "If a person wants to achieve anything, he must have self-esteem and self-confidence." Bandura et al. also pointed out that self-efficacy has the following functions: (1) It determines people's choices and adherence to activities; (2) It affects people's attitude towards difficulties. (3) Influencing the acquisition of new behaviours and the performance of learned behaviours; (4) Affect the mood of activities [30].

Therefore, self-efficacy affects or decides people's choice of behaviour, persistence, and effort of behaviour; It affects people's way of thinking and emotional response and then affects the acquisition of new behaviours and the performance of learned behaviours [13]. For example, High self-efficacy: Has high expectations and achievements. High self-efficacy can rationally deal with situations, be willing to accept the challenge of emergencies, control self-defeating thoughts and use their wisdom and skills when needed. However, Low self-efficacy: people with low self-efficacy are shy, fail to deal with problems, are helpless in the face of stress, are easily distracted by fear, panic, and shyness, and are unable to use their knowledge and skills when needed.

As a result, conclusions can be drawn based on the above theories. The higher the self-efficacy, the greater the probability of success. According to Bandura's Self-Efficacy theory, previous performance levels affect self-efficacy, but it affects different people differently [31]. This viewing is because mediation processing is at work, in which the perception of the nature of competence is an essential factor. Some people take an incremental view that capabilities are variable and controllable; Others prefer an entity-oriented view of competence as a fixed, uncontrollable trait. The former tends to pursue learning goals to master the demanding skills faster and better. For them, failure is a sign of insufficient effort or misapplication of strategy that increases the motivation and effectiveness of their actions. The latter is more about pursuing achievement goals, and the result is a validation of one's abilities. Therefore, the self-efficacy of growth-oriented people will not significantly decrease under the condition of low performance. Still, the self-efficacy of the competence entity orientation group decreased significantly. Winter's research also confirmed that people with a growth view of ability had significantly higher self-efficacy than those with a fixed idea of ability [32]. Therefore, self-efficacy is a crucial foundation for students to perform well in school and work and refers to an individual's guess and judgment on whether he can complete a particular behaviour.

### **3 The Relationship Between Intercultural Responsiveness and Academic Achievement**

#### **3.1 The Relationship Between Intercultural Responsiveness Ability and Students' Performance**

With the acceleration of globalization, communication and exchanges between countries in different fields have deepened, and cultural communication is indispensable [33]. For example, cultivating intercultural communication skills can help students develop empathy for other cultures and eliminate cultural centrism. Without a sense of multicultural contextualization, students often have difficulties in communication because of their different understandings of specific cultural phenomena. For instance, if empathy is lacking in cross-cultural communication, it is impossible to understand and evaluate other people's values correctly, so there is no common background. The ability of intercultural communication can help people open up and accept different ideas with empathy. Distract them and absorb more new information and ideas without revealing their performance.

This viewing is a good term for this cultural awareness and improvement. For example, Chinese universities emphasize the importance of cultural learning in college English teaching. To integrate into western culture and the general situation of Britain and America at any time, Chinese universities cultivate students' intercultural communication awareness and improve students' intercultural communication competence [3]. When students nurture an understanding of cross-cultural communication, their grades are wetter and better; the practice has proved that their cross-cultural ability is more robust, the higher their College English Test (CET) scores are. The CET is one of the English Assessment Tests for College Students to graduate with a bachelor's degree demanded by the Ministry of Education in China. Therefore, intercultural communication is effective for students to develop their efficacy and achieve their lifelong learning in education.

#### **3.2 Similarities and Differences Between Chinese and British Students in the Cultivation of Cross-Cultural Communicative Competence**

Intercultural communication ability is crucial for improving students' academic and work performance, conducive to better employment for students from all walks of life [14]. For example, Chinese students may make mistakes when communicating with foreigners and misunderstand the exact meaning the international students refer to. This kind of misunderstanding shows that most Chinese students lack the awareness of cross-cultural communication and that Chinese colleges and universities are not enough to train students' intercultural communication competence. The reason is that most universities provide English communication centres, such as English corners, but it is not enough to set up an English corner alone. That is why I propose that students understand the culture and history of people from various countries. By doing so, they can increase empathy and understand contextually from other cultures. For example, many high-achieving students find it challenging to communicate with others once they graduate or enter the workforce. This viewing is because they have less chance of receiving their intercultural communication training in school. In this manner, they often unconsciously express their

thoughts with the help of the rules, communication habits, and ways of thinking in their mother tongue. Their intersection and collision with different cultural factors can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts, which directly affect the success of understanding the meaning behind the words. This condition is what Chinese students might typically encounter.

However, British universities may pay more attention to learning a foreign culture because they want to help students expand their cultural awareness and develop a sense of diversity [2]. For example, Chinese students in British universities need to carry out cultural introduction while imparting linguistic knowledge. Specifically, language instructors should impart relevant cultural background knowledge through vocabulary teaching activities. For example, they are introducing traditional Chinese literature and culture to students in the process of explaining “Tang Poetry (唐诗)”, “Song Ci (宋词)”, “Cheongsam (旗袍)”, and “Woman Match (媒婆).” They tend to introduce the traditional Chinese culture to the students. By doing so, students could have a deeper understanding of Chinese culture in learning Chinese [16]. Comparatively speaking, the UK has done better in this aspect, conducive to improving students’ intercultural communication skills rather than just using linguistic knowledge. Therefore, cultivating intercultural ability is necessary for college students studying higher education in both countries.

### **3.3 Exploring the Ways of Cross-Cultural Responsiveness in Their Work Performance**

Cultural training in translation and communication skills is of great importance for Chinese and British students [34]. The influence of culture on communicative competence manifests in three aspects. One is that understanding and tolerance of culture can help people convey ideas accurately. Another is that culture is very significant to the people’s social circle. Multicultural social circles can quickly improve the ability to comprehend and adapt to different cultures. The other is that the influence of culture on people’s achievements is profound.

Therefore, it is essential to cultivate Chinese and Western college students’ cultural inheritance, understanding, and cultural exchange [35]. Here we need to introduce two theories of Edward T. Hall (1941–2009), Edward’s high and low context culture. The UK belongs to the low-context culture. The so-called low-context culture is the culture with low information transmission and no dependence on the environment. In low context culture, the meaning of information is clearly expressed through language, and a large amount of information is placed in a clear code without relying on the entire thing.

However, China belongs to high-context culture, which refers to how information is highly dependent on the environment [36]. In a high-context culture, the meaning of information lies in the communication environment and the relationship between communication participants. During communication, most information either exists in the temporal context or is internalized in individuals. As a result, when exploring the work performance of British students studying Chinese, the UK will examine whether they are from low context (Britain) or high context (China). For example, the students in low context cultures (UK) commonly consider that indirect expression of communication itself does not respect others and vice versa.



In addition, students in low context cultures (Britain) directly express their thoughts and ideas because they are not good at playing a guessing game [37]. However, students in high-context cultures prefer indirect and obscure expressions when communicating, and more consideration is more feelings of the other person involved to avoid embracing communication. Since British and Chinese cultures are different, British students must understand the way of high context students in their expression and behaviour and vice versa for the Chinese students to understand the way of British ones. Therefore, the university offers a chance to explore intercultural activities for students, which is necessary for their performance.

## **4 The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Academic Performance of British and Chinese Students**

### **4.1 Why Is Emotional Intelligence Important to Students' Performance**

Studies show that success requires 20% intellectual intelligence plus 80% emotional intelligence [38]. Therefore, emotional intelligence (EI) is essential to students' achievement. EI is a concept developed by Salovey of Yale University and Mayer of New Hampshire. It refers to an individual's ability to monitor their own and others' emotions and identifies as one of the most dominant factors in achieving a person in life. The higher the EI, the more likely they are to succeed as George Cuvier said that: "Genius, first of all, is attention."

Primary school students are the first critical period for high-speed learning. If such attention problems occur repeatedly, it will be difficult for even the most innovative minds to catch up. EI training for ages 7–12 focuses on self-management and control, including methods and techniques for controlling emotions and behaviours, so that children learn to be more self-disciplined [39]. If children often lack self-confidence, they will become less and less inclined to study. For instance, teachers prefer those children with correct learning attitudes and good academic performance in school and often give these children more care and encouragement. And for those so-called "poor students" and not severe students, more criticism, even lack of attention.

Such treatments often let these "poor students" become less confident and even resist teachers and the school. EI training in strengthening self-knowledge enhances the child's self-confidence and cultivates the ability to believe in themselves [38]. This viewing enables children to understand their strengths and weaknesses, which could help them positively face their challenges such as learning failure, pressure, and anxiety. The EI refers to the critical quality elements for human beings to understand and interpret their own emotions, understand, guide their feelings, improve their quality of life, and determine the future through self-regulation and control of emotions. Thus, emotional intelligence is essential to students' performance, which the universities and students themselves need to be addressed.

### **4.2 The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence Ability and Students' Academic Performance**

American educators and psychologists believe that 80 percent of a child's academic achievement is determined by their emotional intelligence skills and only 20 percent



by intelligence [8]. To further explore the influence of emotional intelligence on students' achievement, it is necessary to explore the relationship between EI level and students' achievement. EI is a significant factor in students' growth, providing an essential foundation for the smooth running of students' cognitive activities. The EI skills include self-confidence, willpower, stress management, self-management skills, frustration resistance, and problem-solving.

Specifically, children should clarify values and establish good learning motivation, linking today's learning with tomorrow's college and employment plans [40]. When students are in the face of heavy learning tasks, they should know how to set goals and use a goal-oriented way to master the method of time management. Students with high EI always easily cope with test pressure, anxiety, and self-motivation. Good EI allows children to delay gratification and manage themselves well.

In addition, the quality of the interpersonal relationship has a significant impact on students because a harmonious peer relationship makes children fancy school more [41]. They need to know how to establish and maintain a friendship, learn to refuse without hurting each other, and accept rejection simultaneously. Students with high EI are more confident, self-motivated, and easy to seize opportunities to express themselves. Also, their ability to resist setbacks is relatively strong and not easy to give up, and they rarely join a small group. Therefore, the EI abilities show up in academic achievement and fundamentally shape a child's character, which plays a significant positive role in their future career and happiness in life.

### **4.3 Similarities and Differences Between Chinese and British Students in the Cultivation of Emotional Intelligence**

Universities in the UK and China use different ways to develop students' emotional abilities [42]. In China, parents often cultivate students' emotional intelligence, and parents often adopt six methods [43]. First, parents are an excellent example for their children. Every word and deed of parents has a subtle effect on children and has a profound influence. To cultivate children's emotional intelligence, parents must first establish a good social image and find a good interpersonal relationship, so it is possible to set a good example for children. Second, they help students control their emotions. Parents need to let their children know which feelings are good and which emotions are destructive. Good positive emotions, such as enthusiasm, joy, optimism, kindness, and other socially acceptable emotions, should express themselves freely. Negative emotions, such as apathy, depression, pessimism, anger, and others not easy to accept, should be suppressed and eliminated.

Third, parents pay attention to the subtle changes in children's feelings. They should communicate with their children and be their friends. If it is reasonable and can satisfy children's requirements, parents should try to meet them. If it is an unreasonable requirement, parents are responsible for explaining why they cannot give satisfaction to the child. Fourth, parents create interpersonal communication conditions for children. For example, parents introduce guests to their children and let them have a free conversation. In this way, kids will gradually learn how to treat others.

Fifth, parents should also take their children to some parties to let them see all kinds of scenes and know to deal with all sorts of people. In this way, a child can increase

knowledge and make the child generous in interpersonal communication. Sixth, they encourage children to participate in a variety of group activities. In group activities, let children live with other children of the same age to develop their communication skills. For example, parents should welcome their children's friends to play in their home and encourage them to play in other children's homes. By doing so, they could help their children to develop their communication skills with a trust-based friendship with others in their study.

However, Britain adopts three-dimensional EI education [44]. First, EI education in the UK also starts at primary school and often lasts if the "Mathematics" those local children are taught. Such EI classes are often taught without textbooks and outside the school, allowing children to learn this life lesson in a free and honest atmosphere. Nevertheless, in some undeveloped English towns, local schools offering classes on relationships are often met with scepticism. However, some argue that EI education asks for trouble in schools with many children from low-income families or single-parent families.

Second, the Supervision Bureau of Education Quality, which oversees EI in schools across the UK, insists that dynamic education is just as important as other academic learning. The supervisory officer said that education in EI helps students better understand criticism and experience emotions more comprehensively, which is essential for their intellectual growth. More emotional education takes place outside the campus. In British homes, there is a similar "family table culture." In a traditional British family, there are rules about using napkins, knives, and forks, where to place arms, and even how to talk politely.

Third, many British families encourage their children to eat independently to cultivate their independence. Parents will let their children clean their messy desks, know to say "sorry" to family members, and help children learn to care for others and be polite. This viewing is all seen as EI training. Therefore, EI training in China and the UK addresses the importance of students developing their emotional competence to have a better life and learning outcome.

#### **4.4 British and Chinese Ways of Harnessing Students' Emotional Intelligence Ability to Achieve Achievement in Work Performance**

It is equally important to explore how Chinese and UK universities use students' intellectual achievements in their work performance [45]. China and the UK have different emphases on examining students' EI ability, which results in different ways.

In China, high EI is often measured in social and work situations [46]. Students' EI is often directly related to "knowing how to speak" and "being able to speak." If a student speaks at work without compromising his interests and saving others' Lianmian in Chinese, they might encounter problems in Chinese work conditions. The Lianmian in Chinese culture means "face," which indicates a person's dignity [3]. If they make other Chinese ones lose Lianmian in public, one could always think out how to make them lose Lianmian at different times or become an enemy.

However, the UK tends to associate EI with qualities such as freedom and sincerity, care, and kindness [2]. In addition to examining students' working ability, British enterprises also pay special attention to whether students are sincere to others and whether

they will take the initiative to care for and help others. If students are helpful, polite, and friendly during an internship with a UK company, they consider that the students have a high EI [11, 47]. Therefore, EI in both cultures in China and the UK has a different contextual meaning for students and university awareness while implementing college programs and activities in education.

## 5 Conclusion

This study finds out that students in China and the UK need to develop their self-efficacy, intercultural communication competence, and emotional intelligence. By comparing students' performance contextually in China and the UK, this study found that college education neglects the importance of developing student self-efficacy and personal competency and is still weak in a way. Therefore, no matter what country, we should cultivate students' sense of self-efficacy, intercultural communication ability, and emotional intelligence even in higher education. Findings suggest that universities in China and the UK need to help students develop their self-efficacy, intercultural communication competence, and intellectual competence. Therefore, I suggest that future study of using the mixed research method addresses how Chinese students in mainland China and the United Kingdom for them to foster a student's self-efficacy in creating a supportive school culture for students' lifelong integrity in the high-power and low-power distance higher education contexts in China and the United Kingdom.

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