



# The Comparison of Undergraduate Education in Education between the UK and China - Taking Beijing Normal University and the University of Cambridge as Examples

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**Abstract.** With the deepening of globalization, international educational exchanges have become increasingly frequent, making comparative studies of different countries' educational systems and teaching practices an important area of academic research. This paper aims to compare the undergraduate education in education at Beijing Normal University and the University of Cambridge, exploring the differences in educational philosophy, curriculum design, teaching methods, and student assessment. Through a literature review and case analysis, this paper reveals how the two top universities adapt to their respective national cultural backgrounds and educational needs, and proposes possible directions for future cooperation and innovation in educational modes.

**Keywords:** Education; Beijing Normal University; University of Cambridge; Educational comparison; international co-operation.

## 1 Introduction

In the trend of globalization, educational internationalization has gradually become a key factor in driving global education development[1]. China and the United Kingdom, two countries with a long history and culture, have their own unique educational systems, and Beijing Normal University and the University of Cambridge play a pivotal role in the educational fields of China and the United Kingdom respectively[2]. Beijing Normal University, as a leader in China's education field, adheres to the concept of student-oriented cultivation, and is committed to carrying out all kinds of long and short-term exchange programs, aiming at improving students' international competitiveness and innovation ability, broadening their international vision and cultivating international talents[3]. The university has carried out more than 100 inter-university cooperation programs with famous universities abroad, covering many countries and regions, in various forms of exchange, including exchange programs, one-way visit programs, double-degree joint cultivation programs and short-term exchange programs[4,5]. These programs not only promote the international mobility of students, but also contribute to the internationalization of education[6]. The University of

Cambridge, as one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in the United Kingdom and the world, has had a profound impact on global higher education[7]. The University of Cambridge adheres to the educational philosophy of “making a gentleman”, emphasizes the rational training and character building of human beings, and believes that the only and highest purpose of education is to acquire knowledge and develop wisdom. Cambridge University advocates original research, advocates the accumulation of thick and thin, and opposes the educational utilitarianism of quick success and quick profit[8]. This educational philosophy has not only shaped the independent thinking ability of Cambridge students, but also earned them a high reputation in the global education field. The education systems of China and Britain are unique. The British education system emphasizes the cultivation of talents rather than professionals, and focuses on cultivating students' rational thinking, emphasizing the cultivation of creative ability and encouraging students to think positively[9]. In contrast, China's education system focuses more on stage-by-stage entrance exams and the final college entrance examination, and students' learning in primary and secondary school is mainly for exam preparation. In terms of teaching methods, classroom teaching in China is mainly teacher-centered, while classrooms in the UK are centered on discussions among students[10]. Beijing Normal University and the University of Cambridge have significant influence in the fields of education in China and the UK, respectively. By comparing the undergraduate education in education at these two universities, this study aims to reveal the educational models and their effects under different cultural and educational systems, providing theoretical support and practical reference for international educational exchanges[11]. This study selects Beijing Normal University and the University of Cambridge as the research objects. A literature review is used to analyze relevant education policies, curriculum frameworks, and course standards. Interviews are conducted to obtain the views and experiences of frontline teachers and students. A case study method is used to deeply analyze the specific educational practices and achievements of the two universities. The comparative studies on education in education at home and abroad mainly focus on education policies, teacher training, and course content[12]. However, there is a lack of in-depth comparative analysis between specific universities such as Beijing Normal University and the University of Cambridge, especially in the field of undergraduate education in education.

## **2 Overview of Education in Education at Beijing Normal University and the University of Cambridge**

### **2.1 Development History of Education Major at Beijing Normal University**

Beijing Normal University has gone through a century of development since it opened its education program at the beginning of the 20th century, and its system of training education professionals has become increasingly perfect. As a pioneer and leader in the field of education in China, Beijing Normal University program is very comprehensive,

covering all levels from basic education to higher education. The university not only focuses on the transfer of theoretical knowledge, but also emphasizes the cultivation of practical skills to ensure that students are able to perform various roles in the field of education. In order to meet the needs of future education, Beijing Normal University continues to explore and innovate educational programs. For example, the university has established the Future Education High Precision Innovation Center, which is dedicated to promoting the intelligent transformation of education, promoting the innovation of education business through intelligent technology, exploring innovative education public services, and promoting the modernization of education. These innovative programs not only enhance the quality of education, but also provide students with more opportunities for practice and research. Through various research programs and practice platforms, students are encouraged to participate in scientific research and teaching practice. The university provides platforms such as the National Base for Cultivating Talents and Scientific Research in Basic Liberal Arts Disciplines and the National Base for Cultivating Talents for Research and Teaching in Basic Science Disciplines, which provide students with a favorable environment and resources for scientific research. Beijing Normal University has a profound history and strong faculty in the training of education professionals, providing students with comprehensive and diversified educational resources and development platforms.

## **2.2 Development History of Education at the University of Cambridge, UK**

The University of Cambridge has a long history and international reputation as one of the world's leading educational institutions, with a wide range of educational programs. The University of Cambridge's tutorial system is a central feature of its undergraduate education, renowned for its highly personalized and interactive approach to teaching and learning. Under this system, students meet with their tutors on a one-to-one or one-to-one basis each week to discuss academic issues, research progress and dissertation writing. This face-to-face interaction not only helps to develop students' critical thinking, but also hones their independent research skills. The tutorial system in Cambridge pays more attention to personalized guidance. Tutors are usually experts in the academic field, who not only guide students academically, but also lead them to think deeply through discussions and questions, so as to cultivate students' academic depth and research ability. In the UK, each undergraduate has three tutors, and students are required to have weekly discussions with their tutors and record the discussions on the system. Cambridge University is even more rigorous, requiring students to present their own ideas. If a student does not speak up at every discussion, they are considered to be lacking ideas, unsuitable for what they are studying, and may even be discouraged from doing so. The tutorial system in Cambridge creates a strong academic atmosphere where students are encouraged to actively explore and challenge the boundaries of existing knowledge. In this atmosphere, students have access to a wealth of academic resources, including libraries, research facilities and academic networks. At the same time, the relationship between mentor and student is closer, with the mentor not only acting as an academic advisor, but also as a guide and supporter of the student's per-

sonal growth. This relationship helps to create a supportive and challenging learning environment that promotes the holistic development of the student. Cambridge University's educational philosophy emphasizes "student-centeredness", encourages students to actively explore the unknown, and gives students enough freedom and space for learning.

### **3 Comparison of Curriculum Setting and Teaching Content**

Beijing Normal University is a prestigious institution of higher learning in China, known for its profound academic strength. The curriculum of Beijing Normal University fully reflects its comprehensive and practical character, aiming to train teachers and educators with comprehensive quality and professional competence. Foundation courses are an important part of the curriculum of Beijing Normal University. Courses in this area are designed to lead students to an in-depth exploration of the nature, purpose and value of the curriculum, as well as its relationship with society, culture and economy. In addition to theoretical studies, Beijing Normal University also attaches great importance to practical and hands-on teaching. The university usually arranges students to participate in internships, research projects and community service activities so that students can integrate theoretical knowledge with practical work and enhance their ability to solve practical problems. In addition, the curriculum of Beijing Normal University emphasizes interdisciplinary integration. Students not only study basic courses, but also have the opportunity to take courses in other disciplines in order to broaden their knowledge horizons and enhance their interdisciplinary understanding and application.

The University of Cambridge is known for the depth and breadth of its curriculum and teaching content, aiming to provide students with a comprehensive and rigorous education. The curriculum is designed to be flexible and encourages students to pursue interdisciplinary studies in order to develop their ability to solve complex problems. The University of Cambridge offers over 30 undergraduate programs covering more than 65 different subject areas, ranging from the arts and humanities to engineering and technology, from biological sciences to clinical medicine to physical and social sciences. The University of Cambridge's program design philosophy reflects a liberal education ideology, allowing students to choose courses based on their interests and career plans. For those students who are still exploring their areas of interest, the curriculum provides flexibility and allows them to reorient themselves as they progress through their studies. These programs give students greater freedom to choose the direction they are interested in. Turning passivity into initiative enhances students' learning ability and thirst for knowledge, which can enable them to adapt more quickly to the changing employment environment.

## 4 Teaching Methods Compared

The teaching methods of Beijing Normal University aim to cultivate students' all-round abilities and professionalism in order to meet the challenges and demands of the future education field. In terms of teaching methods, BNU adopts diversified teaching modes, including lectures, discussions, case studies and practical teaching. Lecture is the traditional teaching method, in which knowledge is systematically imparted through professors to provide students with a solid theoretical foundation. Discussion classes, on the other hand, involve in-depth discussion of specific topics by students under the guidance of teachers, a method that encourages active participation and enhances their critical thinking and communication skills. Case studies, on the other hand, allow students to learn how to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world problem solving by examining specific educational situations. Practical teaching, on the other hand, allows students to apply what they have learned in real educational settings and improve their teaching skills through teaching internships and micro-grid teaching.

Compared with Beijing Normal University, Cambridge University its mentoring system plays an important role in teaching. The implementation path of Cambridge mentoring can be divided into three stages: pre-mentoring, mentoring and post-mentoring, and has four different goal connotations; for Cambridge mentoring students, the interaction with their mentors is usually a very valuable academic and personal experience. Students typically develop a close relationship with their tutor, who becomes a valued partner and guide in their learning journey. Students may feel more confident and purposeful because they have a mentor they can trust to provide advice and guidance on courses, research, career development and personal development. Mentorship helps students to better understand their academic interests and potential and to develop a personalized learning plan. In addition, mentorship can provide students with a favorable academic environment in which they can explore and discuss a variety of topics and issues with their peers. Students can connect with mentors and other students, share ideas and experiences, and learn from each other's feedback through activities such as group discussions and seminars.

## 5 Conclusion

This study shows that although Beijing Normal University and the University of Cambridge have different educational philosophies, curricula, and teaching methods, they are both committed to cultivating high-quality education professionals. The comparative analysis of these two schools reveals the advantages and challenges of education in different cultural contexts. It is recommended that Beijing Normal University further expand international cooperation and incorporate more cross-cultural elements. At the same time, it is suggested that the University of Cambridge strengthen exchanges with traditional Chinese educational concepts and enrich its educational model. Both sides should strengthen cooperation and jointly develop innovative educational programs that meet the needs of future education.

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