

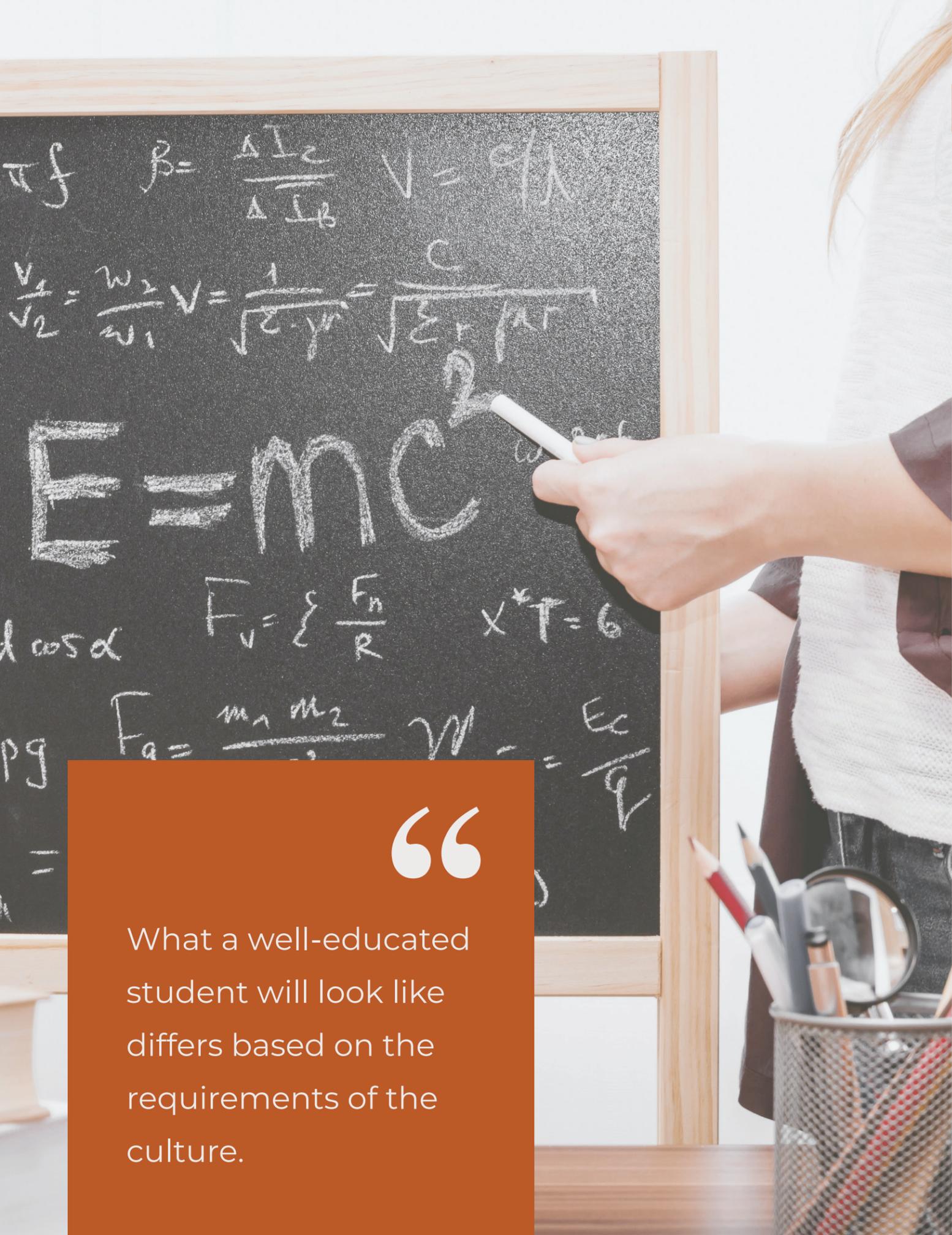


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**CultureBound**  
**MAGAZINE**

**Culture in Academics**

How does our culture affect how we learn?  
What are the foundations of education?

AUGUST 2021



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What a well-educated student will look like differs based on the requirements of the culture.



# How Then Should We Learn?

**Dr. Terry Steele, Ph. D., Dr. of Missiology**

The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that, “Everyone has the right to an education.” There are a variety of K-12 educational systems and educational philosophies throughout the world that could fulfill this definition. The different forms of education differ vastly between cultures. Early education in Japan emphasizes academics while Finland (a leader in educational outcomes) emphasizes play, and the US emphasizes creative problem solving.<sup>1</sup> How effective are these systems in educating students?

In Asia and parts of Africa, education is lecture-based with memorization of massive amounts of data. Evaluation is based upon a student’s ability to accurately replicate the given data. These systems are effective in producing students who have vast quantities of knowledge including statistics, formulas, dates, and definitions. Educational systems like that of Finland and America focus on creativity instead of uniform encyclopedic knowledge. While lectures, memorization of facts, formulas, and definitions exist in these schools, the emphasis historically has been placed on innovation and creativity, rather than replicating memorized data.

Given the stated outcomes of each educational system, it would appear that Eastern students excel at knowing more hard facts and Western students excel at problem solving. Which is the superior form of education? International analytical tools, like the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), find that Eastern students are rated higher in test scores than Western students, especially students from North America. Statistics<sup>2</sup> and analytical exams like PISA seem to prove that the Eastern education system produces better educated students.<sup>3</sup> However, university attendance rates favor the West, including the numbers of Eastern graduates who attend Western universities.<sup>4</sup>

Often, statistical analysis of educational outcomes fails to wrestle with cultural or geographical factors. For example, some standardized tests have been criticized as being written for urban students with questions about population density, relative price of common groceries, access to public transportation, or even access to hospitals and doctors. These tests fail to acknowledge the lives of rural students, who know the reality of rising before dawn, milking cows, tilling fields, and long commutes to church, school, or grocery stores. Do these assessment tools indicate that urban educational systems are superior to rural educational systems? International assessment tools continue the trend of evaluating one group over another, but add

cultural distinctives to the geographic differences. Do these tests lead to competition between educational systems and students from these systems?

Different cultures require different outcomes in order to produce productive members of society. Any of these educational systems are capable of training students that will be able to function well in that given culture, but not in all cultures. What a well-educated student will look like differs based upon the requirements of the culture those students live in. While these systems appear to have vastly different focuses, each seeks to educate students based on the standards of their particular culture.

<sup>1</sup> <https://ced.ncsu.edu/news/2020/07/27/ask-the-expert-how-is-education-different-around-the-world-teaching-philosophies-differ-but-we-all-want-what-is-best-for-our-students-says-friday-institute-executive-director-hill/> (Last accessed 8-11-21).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/education-systems-around-world-comparison-sashi-gundala/ucation> (Last accessed 8-11-21).

<sup>3</sup> According to "Program for International Student Assessment" (PISA).

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.borgenmagazine.com/eastern-and-western-education-differences/> (Last accessed 8-11-21).



# A Unique Academic Tradition

Have you ever stopped to consider that your academic experiences are not the same all over the world? When we think of school, we have our traditions in mind. In the United States, these can include starting in August, summer break in June, coed classes, 7 or 8 hour school day, 20-person classrooms, shopping for school supplies, and so much more.

Take a look at some of the school traditions around the world. You might be surprised!



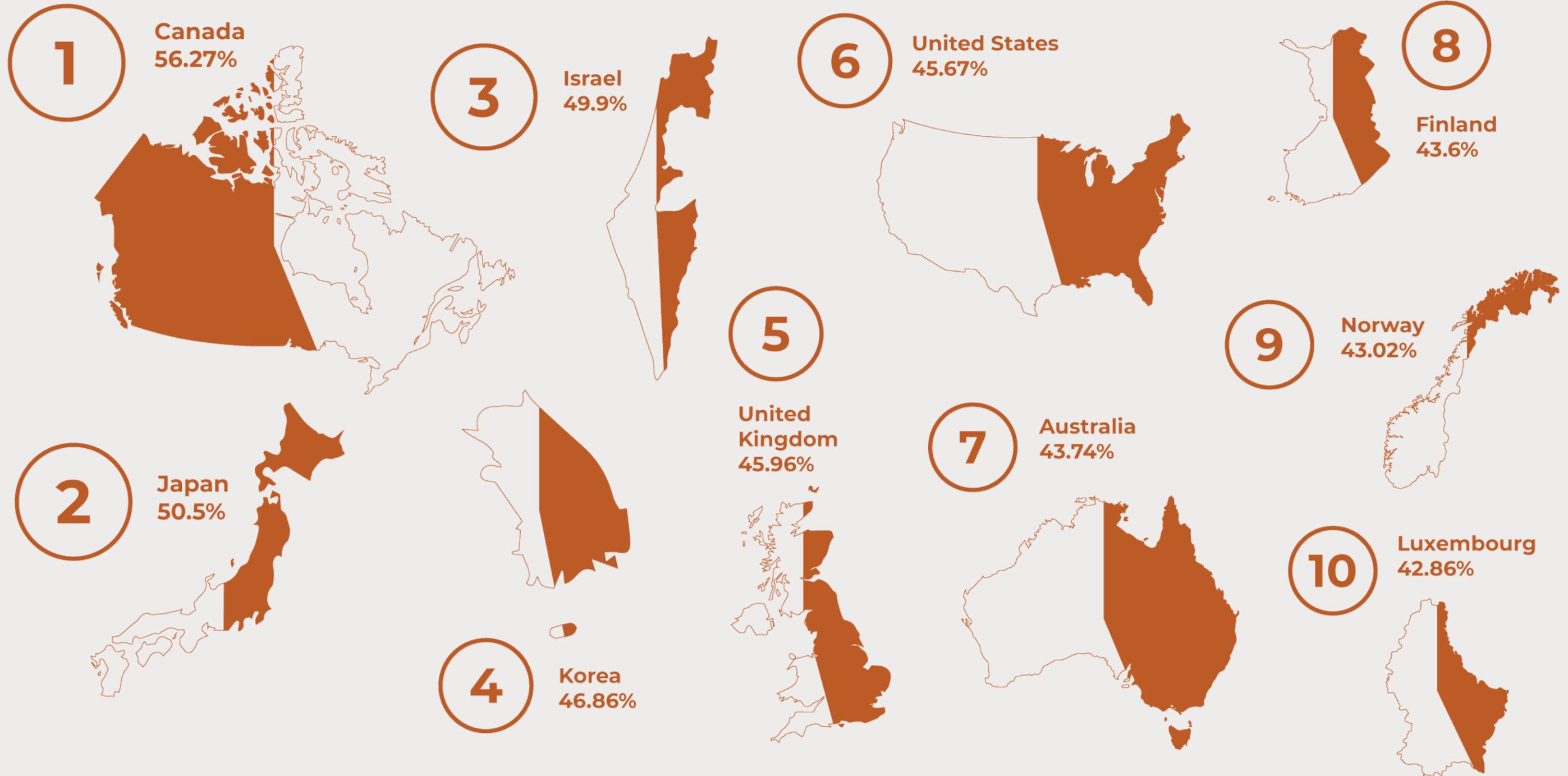


- You might have experienced virtual school, but have you heard of radio school? In Australia, lessons are taught via radio to those who live in faraway places.
- Summer break in the United States is typically June and July, but in Chile the summer break is December through March - 3 months off!
- Brazilian culture honors mealtimes. At lunch, students are able to leave and eat at home with their family.
- In Holland, children will only be able to start school on the day they turn 4. This means every day might bring a new student!
- Due to flooding, Bangladesh has created over 100 schools on boats! These solar-powered crafts even have Internet and a library.
- Common subjects are reading, writing, and math, but in Iceland students are also taught knitting.
- Imagine being the only student at your entire school...this is the reality for the smallest school in the world, located in Italy.

You can find more interesting facts and school traditions in this article: <https://bitrebels.com/lifestyle/20-facts-education-around-world>.

# The Top Education Nations

Did you guess any correctly? These results are based on the percentage of the country whose adults aged 25-64 have completed a two-year degree, four-year degree, or vocational program. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/02/07/the-10-most-educated-countries-in-the-world.html>



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# CultureBound + YOU

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**Our academic experience  
is unlike any others.**

As we have discussed in previous articles, there may not be one way that is best to learn. Eastern and Western cultures teach their students according to their own preference and tradition. If this is the case, how can we make a curriculum that aims to teach those around the world?

CultureBound courses are developed with years of experience in mind. Our trainers have been to many places and have picked up on consistencies among groups of people.





No matter where you come from, it always helps to learn by doing. Even the most memorization-based cultures will eventually transition you to practicing what you know through a career. CultureBound has adapted this truth in our foundational courses. When you join us for CultureCourse and LanguageCourse, you will get to actually experience what you are learning and put into practice. You will be able to learn more in one 30-hour course that incorporates hands-on experiences than you would in a month-long classroom setting.

**For more information or to register, visit our website!  
[www.culturebound.org](http://www.culturebound.org)**

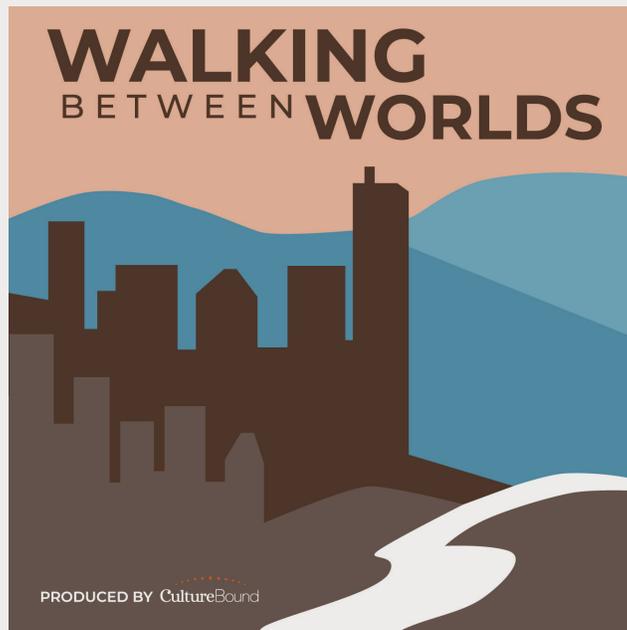
CultureBound also strives to make our material interesting to learn. With video content, worksheets, and discussion boards, you aren't just sitting and watching a lecture for an hour straight. Our students are engaged, which increases their knowledge of the material in the end. Our staff have worked tirelessly to present the most important information in creative ways and we consistently receive glowing reviews from our attendees. We hope you join us for this wonderful learning experience!

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