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CROSS-CULTURAL SERVICE MANAGEMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL STUDENTS IN CHINA: DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

In the era of globalization, the internationalization of higher education has become a worldwide trend. The cross-cultural management service for Chinese international students is still in the exploratory stage. The management system and management methods still need to be improved. In particular, international medical students have special needs in service management. The current service management model is very challenging to meet the needs of students. Therefore, it is a vital topic to explore cross-cultural service management strategies suitable for international medical students and improve service management quality. This paper combs the relevant research on cross-cultural adaptability and cross-cultural service management of international students in China. In addition, the dimensions of cross-cultural service management are explored in medical colleges and universities, and the quality and service expectation of cross-cultural management services for international medical students. This paper puts forward suggestions to improve the cross-cultural service management of medical colleges and universities from three levels: government, universities, and students.

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1. Introduction

International students' education has become an important yardstick to measure the internationalization level of colleges and universities. According to OECD (2021) statistics, the

number of international students in the world globally was 2.1 million in 2000 and increased to 6.1 million in 2019. Most world-class universities also have a high degree of internationalization. They are attracting talents from various countries and providing global vision for their students. They push the scope and depth of internationalization to a new stage in exchanging knowledge, teachers, and students (Chen & Yang, 2016). All higher education institutions are trying to explore the best mode of teaching and management of international students to promote the deepening and development of their own internationalization level since this is essential in education internationalization (Chen, 2020).

According to the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2018), a total of 492,000 international students from 196 countries and regions study in China, of which 58,090 international students study medicine in China. In addition to the general attributes of science and technology, medicine also has its particularity. That is, it studies people as the object and directly serves the people. More than any other science, medicine emphasizes humanistic care and requires medical workers to have a high moral standard (Li et al., 2009). Moreover, medical majors have great difficulties in learning many courses and have very high requirements for students' learning levels and self-discipline abilities (Zhu et al., 2020). In addition, because international medical students in China require English languages for teaching, they are generally in separate classes and have less communication with Chinese students, resulting in insufficient cultural exchange and recognition (Zhu et al., 2020). Furthermore, international students in different countries still have different perceptions of life, health, and medical services. Therefore, medical colleges and universities should improve cross-cultural service management, improving students' learning experiences and help them complete their studies (Fan & Lu, 2014).

Although the enrollment scale of international students' education is expanding, a professional service system for studying in China has not established (Wang & Liu, 2020). At present, the service management of international medical students basically converges with other professional students, paying only attention to the school's internal organization and system construction, ignoring the government and society. As medical education tends to be more international and diversified, we must build a model and method suitable for international medical students' management to cultivate their adaptation to the international market.

Therefore, this paper combs the relevant research on cross-cultural adaptability and cross-cultural service management of international students in China, and puts forward suggestions to improve cross-cultural service management in medical colleges and universities from the three levels: government, universities, and students.

2. Literature Review

Cross-cultural adaptation of international students

Some scholars have researched international students' cross-cultural adaptation. Lorraine Brown (2009) believes that cultural differences significantly impact on the study and life of international students, and the management of international students is the management of heterogeneous cultures. Jean Russell (2010) investigated the relationship between cross-cultural stress and interpersonal communication, mental health, and lifestyle among international students. The results show that most students agreed that there are different degrees of cross-cultural pressure. In the new cultural environment, international students' interpersonal relations and academic achievements will be affected by cross-cultural barriers. Medicine is an efficient discipline. In addition to having a solid natural science foundation, the learning of medical knowledge also needs to have comprehensive qualities and abilities such as extensive humanistic quality and interpersonal communication (Du, 2015). International students from different countries

and cultural backgrounds will inevitably have various maladjustments, which will seriously affect their studies and life (Feng et al., 2018). From the current cross-cultural adaptation of international students in China, according to Li (2009), the cross-cultural adaptation of international students in China is generally at a medium level. The top three with the lowest adaptation level are "learning and using Chinese", "participating in research projects hosted by Chinese scholars" and "participating in Chinese culture courses". In addition, factors such as Chinese level, age and overseas experience of international students have a significant impact on their cross-cultural adaptation.

Moreover, the mental health level of international students is related to cross-cultural adaptability (Zhang & Li, 2019). According to his research, the comparison results of various indicators of mental health show that the anxiety score of international students is significantly higher than Chinese students, and the score of social dysfunction is significantly lower than Chinese students. The positive emotion is significantly higher than Chinese students, while the negative emotion is significantly lower than Chinese students. Apart from that, the subjective well-being of international students in each period is significantly higher than Chinese students, but their satisfaction is significantly lower than past life satisfaction. According to the "cross-cultural adaptation model" proposed by Berry (1990), cultural adaptation can be divided into the following types: integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization. The research results of international medical students in China show that the mental health level of integration type is the best, followed by the isolation type; the mental health level of edge type and the assimilation type is the worst, and there is a tremendous pressure on cross-cultural adaptation (Zhang et al., 2019).

Colleges and universities must provide better services to attract students and meet their needs. The international students' cross-cultural adaptability and mental health level of the international students are related to the cross-cultural management services of colleges and universities. The identity of students in the university is equivalent to customers. According to the survey of international students of Peking University, the satisfaction rate of international students in terms of learning status and overall satisfaction is high, from 20% to more than 60%; in terms of learning support, education and teaching, communication mechanism and daily life, the satisfaction rate is between 40% and 47%; in terms of the enrollment application and enrollment guidance, the satisfaction rate is close to 40% (Wang et al., 2014). However, in this study, the research object involves international students in various specialties, and there is a lack of systematic investigation on the satisfaction of international students in medical colleges and universities.

Managing cultural conflict among international students

The application of cross-cultural management theory in the field of education is to establish a cross-cultural dimension based on educational management research. International student managers manage students from different cultural backgrounds, countries, regions, and nationalities. Managers set up cross-cultural management mechanisms and methods in a multicultural atmosphere to resolve cultural conflicts and realize the objectives of teaching the international students (Liu et al., 2011).

Cross-cultural management involves people, things, and things with different cultural backgrounds. The management of different cultures is the essence of cross-cultural management. It is to make correct use of cultural differences, give full play to cross-cultural advantages, avoid cross-cultural disadvantages and effectively manage enterprises (Liu, 2004). International students are substantial multicultural group, reflecting strong cultural diversity. The management of international students is the management of different cultures. In the process of management, improper handling of cultural differences will lead to "cultural conflict". It is considered that the cultural conflict of international students is the contradiction caused by the differences in language, living

habits, values, and other factors in the new campus life of international students from different cultural backgrounds (Lin, 2009). There are two levels of cultural conflict among international students; explicit conflict and implicit conflict. Explicit conflict includes the conflict between behavioral and material culture, which is embodied in the differences in language and living habits; implicit conflict includes the conflict between institutional and spiritual cultures. Ma (2013) pointed out that due to the differences between Chinese and foreign cultures, international students will encounter many difficulties in unfamiliar environments, including language barriers and changes in living habits. International student managers should take the initiative to help international students integrate into the new environment as soon as possible.

Main problems in cross-cultural management of international students in China

According to the document "Measures for the Administration of School Recruitment and Training of International Students" (2017) issued by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Public Security, it is pointed out that the management of international students includes enrollment management, teaching management, school management, scholarship, social management and supervision management. It is pointed out that there is a big gap between the management concept and system of international students in Chinese universities and large countries studying abroad (Ni, 2013). The cultural shock caused by cultural differences has brought great troubles to international students, and brought some difficulties to management. Wang (2014) believed that China's international students' management constitution lacks flexibility. The management mode with Chinese characteristics does not adapt to the management mode expected by international students. On the one hand, managers are too tolerant of international students, resulting in international students ignoring school rules and disciplines, which affect the seriousness of management. On the other hand, the management department needs the spiritual and cultural needs of international students seeking to understand the services provided by colleges and universities divorced from the actual needs of students. Through the investigation and research on the current situation of cross-cultural management and service of colleges and universities in Yiwu, it is found that there are many problems in the cross-cultural management of international students in colleges and universities (Zhang, 2014). The management department focuses on the management of international students and has a weak sense of service. Some managers lacked knowledge of cross-cultural management, lack the way to treat students, and sometimes do things that hurt the feelings of students. In addition, some students could not adapt to the Chinese style of education management, with the manifestation of poor disciplines such as unpunctuality and poor learning issues, which affects the progress of teaching and learning.

There is still limited research studying cross-cultural management among international medical students. In many studies on the management of international students, the content of cross-cultural management is only mentioned briefly, and there is no in-depth research on the factors affecting cross-cultural management.

3. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the cross-cultural service management for international medical students. Cross cultural management services involve educational institutions, managers and students. Educational institutions and managers provide services to students to form customer perceptions and customer complaints: customer perception and students' cross-cultural adaptability form satisfaction with cross-cultural service management. At the same time, satisfaction may also positively relationship with the school brand and customer expectations. Improve cross-cultural management and service based on satisfaction rate and customer complaints, and promote customer loyalty. Therefore, this paper proposes three variables: school cross-cultural

management, students' cross-cultural adaptability, and students' satisfaction. Cross-cultural management and cross-cultural adaptability are independent variables, and satisfaction is the dependent variable.

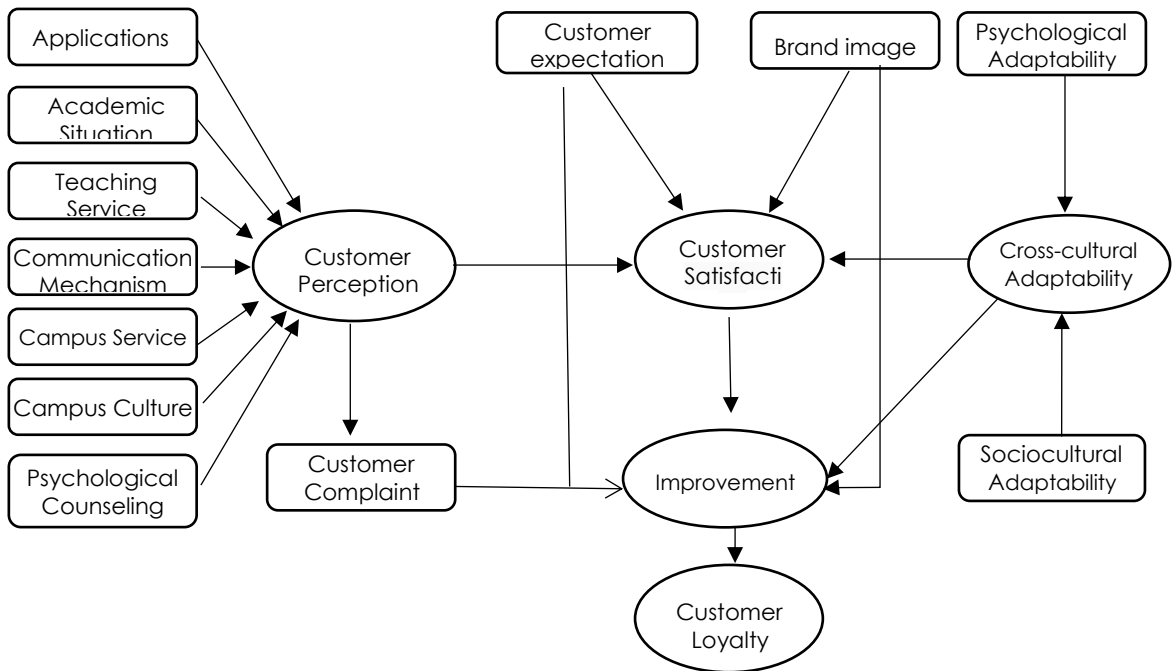


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Cross-cultural Service Management (CCSM)

Cross-cultural adaptation of international students

Searle and Ward (1990) divided cross-cultural adaptation into psychological and socio-cultural adaptation. Psychological adaptation refers to the emotional adaptation of international students' mental health and life satisfaction in cross-cultural communication. Socio-cultural adaptation refers to the adaptability of international students to the social and cultural environment of the study area and the ability to communicate with local students and residents. Moreover, a socio-cultural adaptation scale (SCAS) has been established to measure adaptability at the behavioral level. SCAS is a flexible measurement tool that can appropriately adjust or increase the measurement items according to different populations. Chinese scholar Zhu (2011) divided international students' cross-cultural adaptation into three dimensions: psychological adaptation, socio-cultural adaptation, and academic adaptation. According to this dimension, combined with the actual situation of international students in China, reasonable measurement items can be set to measure the cross-cultural ability of international students.

Cross-cultural management services for international students based on customer satisfaction

Ehsan Sadeh and Mansour (2015) studied the relationship between service quality and satisfaction of colleges and universities believed that students are the actual customers of colleges and universities, and customer satisfaction can be realized through quality management. The

commonly used customer satisfaction evaluation models include the American customer satisfaction index model (ACSI) and European customer satisfaction index model (ECSI). Based on ACSI and China's national conditions, China has established customer satisfaction index model (CCSI). Colleges and universities are institutions that provide services and can be evaluated as service-oriented enterprises. The dimensions of brand image, customer expectation, and perceived quality in the enterprise evaluation model can be adjusted in combination with the actual situation of colleges and universities to form a satisfactory evaluation of international medical students.

According to the above theoretical framework, this paper will discuss the methods to improve the satisfaction rate of international students from two dimensions: the cross-cultural adaptability of international students and the cross-cultural management service of medical colleges and universities.

4. Discussions And Recommendations

Relevant strategies at the government level

The cross-cultural management of international students in China is not only the task of higher education institutions, but also an important responsibility of relevant national institutions. The government must formulate laws and regulations on the service management of international students in China. Relevant government functional departments such as public security departments and foreign affairs departments should closely cooperate with colleges and universities, thus, actively integrate into the cross-cultural management of international students. They also coordinate and organize the function of government departments, and actively formulate and improve the corresponding management systems, laws and regulations to provide necessary strategies for the institutionalization of cross-cultural management. The law on the education of international students should be promulgated to incorporate the provisions on social services for Chinese international students into the legal framework in the future. Hence, legislation can improve the legal level of overseas education in China.

Second, the introduction of supporting laws and regulations related to social services. China should issue a series of documents such as regulations on the administration of work study for international students and regulations on the administration of employment of international students in China to provide legal compliance for the development of social service business for international students in China (Wang & Liu, 2020). Moreover, in the future, the contents of social services for international students in China will be written in law to provide a legal basis for the development of social services for international students in China.

The government plays a leading role in the socialized service system of studying abroad in China. The service subjects of the socialized service system for studying in China should be diverse. The specific undertaking subjects should be industry associations and special service institutions. At the same time, colleges and universities should play their coordination roles as the main body to manage students studying abroad in China. The primary responsibility of the government is to be responsible for the formulation of macro policies for the social management of studying in China and the macro social management of international students in China under relevant national laws, regulations, and policies, and play a leading and organizational role in the socialized service system of studying in China (Wang & Liu, 2020). The trade association is a social organization serving international students' related affairs. Its main responsibilities are to carry out a third-party evaluation, carry out theoretical research and academic exchanges on the education and management of international students in China, provide policy suggestions on the education and

management of international students in China for the departments of government and universities, and carry out the education and management of international students in China. Give play to the role of academic research, provide professional training and think tank platform for international student education in China (Zhang, 2019). Specialized service institutions refer to non-profit institutions that provide social services for international students in China. Their main responsibilities are to provide international students in China with study abroad consultation and visa application before studying in China, as well as systematic services in pick-up, off campus accommodation, residence procedures, off campus work and study, legal consultation and etc. The main responsibility of colleges and universities is to undertake the training and internal management of international students in China, and cooperate with departments of the government to do a good job in students' management and services.

Relevant strategies of medical colleges and universities

Improve international teaching level. Language is an important cause of cultural maladjustment. The language barrier makes students cannot fully grasp the content in class and thoroughly understand professional knowledge. The poor communication with teachers makes theoretical questions cannot be answered in time. Therefore, language training should be carried out, including training the international students Chinese and English language. In addition, Chinese teachers' focus on teaching and classroom discussions is not enough in terms of teaching methods. Classroom discussion is an essential aspect of the difference between higher education in China and in developed countries (Ma & Li, 2015). According to the undergraduate education and training objectives of international medical students in China, combined with the school's own teaching staff and discipline development, universities need to revise the international students' training program to ensure that the training of international medical students can meet the training standards of Chinese medical undergraduates and the standards for medical students from other countries to obtain doctor's license (Feng et al., 2018). The training plan is the concentrated embodiment of the school's teaching concept and school running thought, the programmatic document to ensure the quality of talent training, and the primary basis for organizing education and teaching activities.

Strengthen the construction of teaching staff. China's Ministry of Education (2010) requires that "in combination with the construction of talent team in colleges and universities, strengthen the training ability of teachers in foreign language teaching, improve the evaluation methods of teachers studying in China, and make a group of excellent teachers with high academic attainments, proficient in teaching and caring for students to become the backbone of education studying in China." For medical colleges and universities, the government should increase the allocation of bilingual clinical teachers and improve clinical teachers' teaching ability and level. Teachers and managers should be provided with cross-cultural training regularly to make them understand the characteristics and customs of different cultures, improve their understanding of international students from different cultural backgrounds, and then master flexible cross-cultural management skills and improve service quality (Fan, 2015).

Standardize the management system of clinical practice. Clinical practice is an essential link in medical education. The combination of theoretical knowledge and practical operation determines whether international medical students can become qualified medical workers. Colleges and universities should improve the practice management system. Strictly implement the international student practice management norms and strictly require students' operation requirements, medical record writing, and other aspects to ensure the completion of student practice with quality and quantity. They should do a good job in the centralized training before practice, including clinical skills training, strengthening the students' operation level, and the interpretation of rules and regulations and internship requirements to ensure that students can enter

the internship stage smoothly. International students face language, patient communication, cultural conflict, and other problems in the hospital. The hospital should choose teachers with strong language ability to guide the daily practice of international students. In addition, various activities can be carried out to enrich the internship life of international students and help students adapt to the study and life of the hospital (Chen, 2019).

Improve the school running conditions. To improve the school running conditions mainly includes teaching facilities and living facilities. In improving the teaching facilities, it is necessary to build high-level teaching laboratories, practice bases, voice rooms, libraries, and campus networks. Purchase foreign language books and foreign language periodical databases suitable for the learning, scientific research, and reading needs of international students to meet international students' learning, scientific research, and reading needs in terms of improving living facilities. Colleges and universities should earnestly consider the different dietary taboos of international students with different religious beliefs, increase the types of meals in the canteen, reduce their physical and mental discomfort caused by eating habits, and strive to set up public kitchens for international students to meet various needs and dietary needs of international students with religious beliefs (Fan, 2015).

Personal category of international students

The promotion of international student management is inseparable from international students' active participation and cooperation. As the main body of international education, international students need to play their role in education management

Improving self-management ability among international students is important. The university should pay attention to the self-management ability of international students. By enabling international students to participate in the management work and establishing international student autonomous organizations, it can not only alleviate the burden of university managers but also provide a stage for international students to show themselves, meet the needs of international students' development and coordinate international studies conflicts caused by cultural differences in student management have essential value. Schools should respect the subject consciousness of international students, standardize the behavior of international students with the power of campus culture, and fully stimulate the consciousness and creativity of international students in self-management (Guo, 2016). □

Actively integrate into the local environment. The integration of international students is an interactive process. It needs the implementation of an assimilation policy and the organization of activities in the school. It also needs international students to take the initiative to adapt to Chinese culture and local environment, learn Chinese and pay attention to Chinese social life; take the initiative to participate in various social and school activities and actively cooperate with China, communicate with students, teachers and the public; take the initiative to show their own culture to Chinese students and obtain the recognition and understanding of the people around them, so as to integrate into the school as soon as possible and improve their cross-cultural adaptability (Chen, 2019).

The limitations of the study

The quality evaluation of cross-cultural service management only considers the perspective of international students, and the research dimension lacks the evaluation of teachers and administrators on cross-cultural management services. The scientific evaluation dimension of students' perception needs further verification. The current research object is Chinese colleges and universities. Next, this model will try to expand to other countries.

5. Conclusion

This conceptual paper argues that cross-cultural service management is necessary to serve the international medical students more effectively and efficiently for the stakeholders' benefit. Cross-cultural management services involve the educational institutions, managers, and students. Educational institutions and managers should understand and provide excellent service for the international students. Nevertheless, the students also should improve their cross-cultural adaptability for their satisfaction. The three variables, namely school cross-cultural service management, students' cross-cultural adaptability, and students' satisfaction need to be well-managed. Cross-cultural service management and cross-cultural adaptability are the independent variables (potential mediating variables), whereas student satisfaction is the dependent variable.

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