Cross-cultural Education Model for Foreign Students in China Integrating Ideological and Political Education

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ABSTRACT

With the deepening the “One Belt and One Road” construction, the exchanges between China and other countries in the world are increasingly frequent, the number of foreign students in China is rising, and there are cross-cultural adaptability problems of foreign students in China. The education of foreign students in China undertakes the mission of serving the national external development strategy. In order to better serve the “One Belt and One Road” construction, relying on tradition industry advantage of the School of Civil Engineering, Central South University in civil engineering and railway engineering, a set of cross-cultural education model for foreign students in China integrating ideological and political education is explored and practiced in the foreign student education management of the curriculum system, daily management, cross-cultural counseling, social practice and cultural exchanges, which can be summarized as “one goal, two combinations, three approaches, four abilities and five management measures”. This management model can effectively enhance the cross-cultural adaptability of foreign students, cultivate the emotion of knowing and being friendly to China, improve the education quality of foreign students in China, enhance the international education influence of the Central South University, and promote the spread of Chinese culture.

1. Introduction

The education of foreign students in China is the basic and leading link of the “One Belt and One Road” construction, an important pillar of the overall national strategy, a new starting point for improving the level of education internationalization, and an important starting point for accelerating the opening up of education in the new era [1]. On June 21, 2021, General Secretary Xi Jinping wrote in his reply to the foreign students from the Peking University that he hoped the foreign students in China would “have a deeper understanding of the real China”, and as ambassadors of the Chinese culture, “introduce their feelings in China to more people and play a positive role in promoting the people-to-people ties of all countries”. The rapid expansion of the foreign students in China puts forward new requirements for the traditional educational management model [2].

1.1 Cross-cultural Adaptability Seriously Affects the Study and Life Quality of Foreign Students

Due to the huge differences in social background, religious belief and cultural ethics between China and foreign countries [3,4], there are widespread gaps in knowledge, psychology and culture among foreign students in China, resulting in cross-cultural “shock” phenomenon [5]. If the

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problem cannot be solved for a long time, it will affect the training quality of foreign students. The absence of ideological and political education and campus cultural integration mechanism for the foreign students in China leads to the lack of recognition of Chinese culture and education for some foreign students in China.

1.2 Management Model of Foreign Students in China Needs to be Improved

In the process of teaching and management, to mechanically pursue the same “convergence management” between Chinese and foreign students or give “super national treatment” to the foreign students in China, causes dissatisfaction among foreign students and Chinese students’ incomprehension with negative public opinions sometimes occurring. The insufficient explanation of the management system and policies leads to some overseas students’ resistance and weariness of teaching management measures such as classroom attendance and epidemic prevention and control, which directly affects the teaching quality and the cultivation of the emotion of knowing and being friendly to China.

2. Cross-cultural Education Model for Foreign Students in China

With a history of more than 60 years, the civil engineering of Central South University had a distinct background in railway industry and a complete talent training system, which provided more than 50,000 senior management and technical talents for China’s railway industry. The civil engineering is the first-level national key discipline and “double first-class” discipline of Central South University with the national engineering research center of high-speed railway construction technology and other eight innovative scientific research platforms, which has become a domestic leading research center and innovation base of the important influence on international railway infrastructure providing a professional basis for education for the foreign students in China. The civil Engineering of Central South University has also become the choice of many foreign students in China. In the past teaching process, it was found that the traditional educational management model still has some deficiencies, which led to cross-cultural “shock” phenomenon among foreign students in China. The research on the cross-cultural adaptation of foreign students in China is helpful to understand the western culture and better carries forward the excellent culture of the Chinese nation. It is of great significance to develop the education of foreign students in China and promote international integration.

How to enhance the cross-cultural adaptability of foreign students in China, cultivate the emotion of knowing and being friendly to China, and improve the education quality of foreign students in China have become the key problems to be solved in the management of foreign students in China. Focusing on the cross-cultural adaptation problems faced by foreign students in China, a set of cross-cultural education model for foreign students in China integrating ideological and political education has been explored and practiced by the School of Civil Engineering, Central South University, which can be summarized as “one goal, two combinations, three approaches, four abilities and five management measures”.

2.1 Establishing One Goal

On the premise of taking the sense of Chinese cultural identity as the core, the foreign students were trained as cross-cultural innovative talents with the emotion of knowing and being friendly to China in order to build an international education brand.

2.2 Implementing Two Combinations

2.2.1 Convergence Management is Combined with Humanized Service

A multi-level management system for college leaders, academic administrators, counselors and monitor of international students was formed. With convergence management, the differences in customs and culture are also taken into account to enhance service awareness and help foreign students integrate into the campus as soon as possible.

2.2.2 Professional Training is Combined with Cross-cultural Integration

The curriculum system was reformed and sense of innovation was strengthened to improve the innovation ability of foreign students in China. In the teaching process, the national condition education was increased and cultural experience activities were carried out to improve cross-cultural adaptability.

2.3 Three Approaches

2.3.1 Cultural Experience

Regularly carrying out cultural exchange activities such as Chinese traditional festival experience, Chinese poetry competition and Chinese and foreign cultural exhibition, foreign students were helped to perceive and understand
China and adapt to life in China as soon as possible.

2.3.2 Social Practice

Foreign students in China were encouraged and supported to deeply understand and experience social conditions. Such practical activities as cognition practice, production practice and social investigation were actively carried out jointly with government agencies and large enterprises.

2.3.3 Academic Exchange

Such models of mixed teaching as Chinese and foreign students and professional guidance of academic tutors were explored by organizing innovation and entrepreneurship education, discipline competitions and academic forums so as to improve the teaching quality and academic level.

2.4 Cultivating Four Abilities

2.4.1 Cross-cultural Communication Ability

Cultural exchange activities for Chinese and foreign students were actively organized to enhance mutual understanding and identity, and create a campus cultural atmosphere of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural integration.

2.4.2 Cross-cultural Learning Ability

Foreign students were actively helped and guided to publish a series of concise Chinese teaching materials for engineering majors with campus resources, practice mixed teaching of Chinese and foreign students, cooperate to complete graduation projects, and improve the learning quality of foreign students in China.

2.4.3 Cross-cultural Application Ability

Foreign students in China were encouraged and supported to cooperate with Chinese students to complete social surveys, and provide scientific and technological services for enterprises.

2.4.4 Cross-cultural Innovation Ability

A joint innovation mechanism for Chinese and foreign students was established, and Chinese and foreign students were encouraged to establish cooperative teams to participate in international discipline competitions, in order to promote the effective interaction between foreign students in China and local teachers and students, enhance the experience and perception of cultural differences of foreign students [7], and cultivate the awareness of cross-cultural innovation of foreign students.

2.5 Optimizing Five Management Measures

2.5.1 Strengthening the Construction of Teachers

The management system of personnel salary and international teaching qualification was formulated, high-level teachers at home and abroad were trained and introduced, and a stable team of teaching teachers, practical instructors and academic tutors was established for foreign students in China.

2.5.2 Improving the Curriculum System

According to the talent demand of the source countries and the basic knowledge structure of foreign students in China, the training scheme was formulated for foreign students majoring in civil engineering, and the international education qualification certification was actively completed. The curriculum system was reformed, national education was strengthened, and foreign students in China were encouraged to participate in social practice and service.

2.5.3 Improving Cross-cultural Management

On the basis of fully understanding and respecting the multiculturalism of foreign students in China, the cross-cultural management system of foreign students in China was established and improved. A good job in explanation was done in view of the hot issues concerned by foreign students in China. The rules, regulations and question and answer manual were compiled and regularly updated to realize humanized management.

2.5.4 Enhancing the Chinese Environment

Chinese lectures, Chinese competitions, traditional festival experience, Chinese and foreign cultural exhibition and exchange activities were regularly organized to promote foreign students to enter the communication circle of Chinese students, in order to promote the communication and understanding between Chinese and foreign students while improving their Chinese level.

2.5.5 Enriching Cultural Activities

The form and connotation of foreign students’ cultural activities were further enriched in order to form a campus cultural atmosphere of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural integration, and imperceptibly cultivate the foreign students’ emotion of knowing and being friendly to China.
3. Implementation Process of Education Model

In order to solve the common problem of “cultural shock” in the early stage of enrollment of foreign students in China, the cross-cultural management was incorporated into the education and training system of foreign students in China with running through the whole process of foreign students’ training and management. In order to actively cultivate the Chinese cultural identity of foreign students in China, the school of civil engineering of Central South University explored and practiced the special topic of ideological and political education methods for foreign students in China, made it clear that the core goal of ideological and political education for foreign students in China was to cultivate Chinese cultural ambassadors of knowing and being friendly to China, and build an ideological and political education system for foreign students in China from the aspects of enrollment, cross-cultural management, teacher training, ideological and political education, curriculum system and cultural activities, etc. The integration of Chinese and foreign cultures was effectively promoted, the cross-cultural experience of foreign students in China was enhanced and the negative impact on learning and scientific research was reduced by regularly carrying out Chinese competitions, cultural experience exchanges between Chinese and foreign students, psychological counseling and other activities.

3.1 Enrollment Publicity

Facing the African and Southeast Asian countries along the “One Belt and One Road” countries, various international cooperation models were formed by more than ten visits and investigations to smoothly promote the international cooperation in civil engineering education. Since 2017, Central South University has exchanged visits with the Ministry of education and the Ministry of transport of Nigeria, the Ethiopian National Railway Corporation, the Ministry of education of Thailand, the National Railway Administration of Thailand, the Thai-China Cultural Promotion Committee and other institutions. Both Central South University and Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria, Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia, King Mongkut’s University of Technology North Bangkok, Chiang Mai University and Rangsit University in Thailand, respectively signed international engineering education cooperation agreements, and carried out international talent training projects such as “3+2” (the first three years of study in the source university and the second two years in Central South University), “3+1”, short-term cultural exchange and so on. The project cooperation process was highly concerned by the government of student source country and authoritative media at home and abroad. In addition, in June 2018, the “One Belt and One Road” Railway International Talent Education Alliance was jointly launched and established by Central South University and South-west Jiaotong University, building a platform for international cooperation in engineering education. In April 2020, during the outbreak of COVID-19 abroad, epidemic prevention materials were actively prepared and 10 thousand masks were donated for King Mongkut’s University of Technology North Bangkok, Chiang Mai University and Rangsit University in Thailand by Central South University, practicing a community of human destiny and further enhancing the international influence of Central South University.

3.2 Cross-cultural Management

Under the guidance of the vice dean in charge of international exchanges, the professional administrator was set up to be responsible for the admission review of foreign students, the coordination of the two-way selection of tutors and postgraduates, overall teaching and training management; The administrator of foreign students in the School was set up to be responsible for the mental health consultation, daily activities and social practice of foreign students; Foreign student counselor was set up to be responsible for the entry and exit and registration of foreign students; In 2019, the monitor of foreign students was set up to assist the administrator in auxiliary management, and form a linkage mechanism with Chinese student counselors, enhancing the communication and understanding between Chinese and foreign students and timely dealing with differences and contradictions. While implementing assimilation management, considering the differences in customs, habits, culture and language of foreign students in China, foreign students in China were timely helped to understand language and culture, and integrate into Chinese society as soon as possible.

3.3 Ideological and Political Education

The core goal of Ideological and political education for foreign students in China was to cultivate Chinese culture ambassadors of knowing and being friendly to China. According to the survey results on the status quo of foreign students’ Chinese cultural identity, the ideological and political education system of foreign students in China was needfully constructed from the dimensions of political review, training program, curriculum system and cultural activities.

In the teaching process, Chinese standards and design concepts were explained, compared with international
norms, in order to improve the acceptance of students and further promote Chinese standards. In the courses related to rail transit, the great achievements of China's railway development were shown emphatically, and the spirit with Chinese railway engineering professionals daring to be the first, willing to contribute, people-oriented and great country craftsman was reflected, and the identity of Chinese culture was actively cultivated. In addition, some cultural exchange activities between China and foreign countries were also organized, such as "Zhan Tian-you Tour exhibition", "film viewing of I and My Motherland" and "Mid-Autumn Festival Chinese Poetry Competition". Adhering to China's position, Chinese stories were well told to foreign students in China with achieving good results.

3.4 Curriculum Construction

According to the talent demand of the source countries, students' own characteristics and foreign students' expectation, the professional course system of foreign students in China was adjusted and improved, and the revision of the training program of foreign students in China was completed by School of Civil Engineering, Central South University. A special fund was set up to support teachers in publishing English textbooks and handouts, and 23 volumes of the "One Belt and One Road Railway International Talent Education Series" were compiled. The course of "Civil Engineering Professional Chinese" was explored and set up to promote Chinese industry standards to foreign students in China, trying to teach in class with Chinese students to improve the cross-cultural communication ability of foreign students in China. In the internship and graduation project, Chinese and foreign students were supported and encouraged to jointly complete the internship and graduation project.

3.5 Academic Exchanges

Chinese and foreign students were encouraged to establish cooperative teams to participate in international discipline competitions. In July 2021, the completion of the "higher education thesis Invitational Competition" was launched and organized by the University, encouraging foreign students to write educational papers according to the current situation of China's higher education development, and the development process of Sino-foreign education cooperation. 10 submissions from foreign students in China were received by the competition, 5 of which were published in international journals.

Relying on eight scientific research and innovation platforms such as the National Engineering Research Center of high-speed railway construction technology, 4 national engineering practice education centers such as Wuhan Railway Bureau and Guangzhou Railway (Group) Corporation, and more than 30 college students' practice teaching bases such as CRCC and China Railway, an experimental and practical basis was provided for the scientific research of foreign students majoring in civil engineering in China. Foreign students in China were actively organized to carry out engineering practice and technical services by the School of Civil Engineering. More than 30 scientific research projects and engineering services were participated in, and more than 50 academic papers were published by the research groups composed of Chinese and foreign students.

3.6 Cultural Activities

Foreign students' understanding and identification of Chinese culture were enhanced by organizing traditional cultural experience activities such as making zongzi for the Dragon Boat Festival, guessing lantern riddles for the Mid-Autumn Festival, traveling in Chinese clothes, pasting Spring Festival couplets and so on. In addition, a series of Chinese and foreign cultural exchange activities were also held, such as "mutual talk and integration", "Chinese speech contest", "Yuelu Mountain climbing photography contest" and "Mid-Autumn Festival poetry contest", promoting the interaction and integration of Chinese and foreign students and improving the cross-cultural adaptability of foreign students in China.

4. Promotion and Application

4.1 Promoting the Education of Foreign Students Majoring in Civil Engineering to Significantly Enhance Their International Influence

The education management model of foreign students in China was unanimously praised by the universities such as Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria, King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok, Chiang Mai University and Rangsit University in Thailand, Panama University of science and technology and so on. It had excellent international demonstration effect and is being popularized and applied in international education cooperation with South America and Russia. Thai Deputy Prime Minister Visanu Koan sent a letter and Nay Oke Tint, chairman of China-Myanmar Cultural and Economic Center, personally visited, and they invited our university to establish relevant professional international colleges in their countries for many times. The early achievements in international cooperation of Central South University
were highly praised and the pragmatic spirit of Central South University was fully affirmed by Ambassador Wei Qiang to Panama. The international school-running model of Central South University was fully affirmed by the Chinese Embassy to Chile, to facilitate the railway talent training agreement between Central South University and a well-known university in Chile.

4.2 Establishing Cross-cultural Management System for Foreign Student to be Widely Recognized by Teachers and Students

The education and management model of foreign students majoring in civil engineering in China was practiced for a long time within the School of Civil Engineering. More than 10 delegations of investigation from Southwest Jiaotong University, Beijing Jiaotong University, East China Jiaotong University, Guangzhou University, China Central Soil and other units were received by the School of Civil Engineering, which was unanimously affirmed by peer experts. More than 300 foreign students in China benefited from it. They expressed their gratitude to the University and the School for providing them with valuable learning opportunities, scientific research and practice environment, thanking the school for their care and help in life and study; Studying and living in Central South University was a very enjoyable experience.

4.3 Initially Forming an Ideological and Political Education Mechanism for Foreign Students in China to Train Chinese Cultural Ambassadors

By systematically carrying out cultural activities such as Chinese traditional festival experience, Chinese and foreign cultural exchanges, social practice and community service, foreign students in China were guided to know and understand the real China, with encouraging and supporting them to tell the real Chinese stories they have experienced to the world. Their insights were shared by nearly 100 foreign students in China on overseas social media: China is a great country and has made remarkable achievements; The Chinese people love China very much and they hope that the people of their own country can also have such patriotism; They hope to learn more about China’s advanced technology and experience in civil engineering and build their own country.

4.4 Improving Scale and Quality of Foreign Students in China to Form International Education Brand

Enrollment publicity was actively promoted, and the student source structure was optimized by the School, with the number of foreign students in China increasing from 5 in 2016 to 298 in 2021. The “International College Students’ High-Speed Railway Construction Technology Simulation Invitational Competition” was founded. Nearly 50 teams from more than 30 universities at home and abroad, such as the University of Hanover in Germany, King Mongkut’s University of Technology North Bangkok in Thailand and so on, were attracted to participate in the three competitions in 2018, 2019 and 2021. As a founding member, the school successively joined the university Alliance of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, the University Strategic Alliance of the “One Belt and One Road” initiative, the University Alliance of China-Central Asian States, the University Alliance of China-Russia “Two Rivers Basin”, the University Alliance of China-Russia Communications, and the University Alliance of China-Middle Eastern European Countries. Through the formulation and implementation of training programs and education management mechanisms for foreign students in China, the teaching quality and training level were steadily improved, and the international education brand of “Central South Civil Engineering” was initially formed.

5. Conclusions

With the acceleration of China’s opening to the outside world, the number of foreign students in China will be rapidly expanded, which puts forward new requirements for the traditional education management model. As a new attempt, a new model of cross-cultural education for foreign students in China, namely “one goal, two combinations, three approaches, four abilities and five management measures”, was explored and practiced by taking Chinese cultural identity as the core, which solved many difficulties of foreign students in education and management, enhanced their cross-cultural adaptability, cultivated their emotion of knowing and being friendly to China and improved the quality of foreign student education in China, providing a feasible model for the foreign student education in China. The implementation of the project has significantly improved the international management level and international influence of foreign students, contributed the wisdom of Central South University to the construction of people-to-people connectivity under the “One Belt and One Road” Initiative, and further promoted the spread of Chinese culture.

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