Cross-Cultural Adaptation of Foreign Students in Chinese University: Based on Network of Social Support

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Abstract

With the expansion of globalization and the rapid development of China's economy, the number of international students that come to China to study is increasing. The university department have not emphasized on foreign students' cross-cultural adaptation, but living service facilities, habits, religious and so on, because of traditional education. On the basis of analysis of research literature on foreign students' cross-cultural adaptation, we have found that foreign students' cross-cultural adaptation is influenced mainly by social networks. According to the questionnaire on the Southwest University's foreign students, we have found that the foreign students had been stunted to integrate into the life of local students and public by the university, which built special apartments and management system for foreign students. Therefore, we suggest that the university department offer the same living and studying environment for Chinese and foreign students so that foreign students may join in Chinese society well.

Key words: Foreign students; Network of social support; Cross-cultural adaptation

INTRODUCTION

With the high-speed development of economy in China and the constantly improvement of international status since the Reform and Opening-up in China, more and more foreigners choose to study in China. Most managers of international students in colleges and universities always focus on international students' life service facilities, living habits and religious practices for their traditional education concept, and pay little attention to the problem of further integration into the Chinese social and the cross-cultural adaptation of international students. Although it will improve the efficiency of management of international students and reduce unnecessary friction between local students and international students that the separate apartments and management system for international students, it will become a fence for the foreign students to join the life of local students and public. When the foreign students can further integrate into the Chinese public and cultural life, they can deepen accumulation of traditional Chinese culture. This will expand China's influence in the world and can build the basis for attracting world's talents to work in China. Therefore, discussion on the social integration of students in colleges and universities in China is of great practical and theoretical significance.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Current research on international students' education is concentrated in two parts. One part is on the educational

management of international students, cross-cultural adaptation is another part. However, few researchers pay attention to social integration of international students in China, the term social inclusion contains two layers of meaning that are individual and social communication and individuals from access to social resources. Study on social support and social networks are focused on these aspects.

The concept of social capital was formally proposed by Pierre Bourdieu, the development of Coleman, Putnam, and has gradually attracted people's attention, has now been sociology, economics and political science's many scholars accept. At present, social capital has been widely applied to the employment problem, the problem of poverty, the problem of vulnerable groups, civil society, regional economic development, technological innovation. The research and application of display, social capital can be very good to mobilize social forces. Although there is no uniform definition on social support networks, most scholars believe that social support networks can offer the individual resources. Zhang and Ruan (1999) defined independently social networks and social support. They believed that social networks were relatively stable systems which made up of social relations between individuals. The social support includes all kinds of help from the community and others. He (2001) noted that the individual's social support network referred to the individual who acquired a variety of resources to support money, emotion, friendship, and other social networks. Chen and Yao (2005) defines the social support for an individual as the core; the individual moral and material support is from their own social relations by individuals and others supporting interpersonal systems. Zhang (2002) divided the social support network resources into economic support, life support and spiritual support. Lin (2005) thought that social support resources include instrumental support resources and express support resources. He believed that instrumental support regarded the use of interpersonal relationships as a means to reach a goal, and expressive support itself was the means and the target, which is the emotional experience of the spirit, to gain recognition and respect.

The sources of social support resources, different scholars have different opinions about. Bourdieu thinks, the social capital is that contains the network relationship between people who are familiar with the resources. Potts is so understanding of social capital, "individuals through their memberships for shortage of resources in the network or in the social structure of the broader in obtaining ability—(social capital) ability is not personal inherent, an asset but personal relationships with others in the field. Social capital is the embedding results". Lin (2005) think, social capital is obtained by social capital. It uses the network connection and resources actors or the group's role. Through these views we can think, sources of social capital in the individual environment, is the

formation of interaction between individual and social environment. Therefore, the sources of social capital of individuals, we can determine its interaction with the surrounding social environment.

Therefore, we can think that a person's social support network is more developed, and its ability to mobilize more social resources, its integration with the community more closely. According to the above theory, it is consider that the students will get greater social integration, if they have access to more resources.

Social support network is valued by people; it is because it can bring some useful resources for people. At the same time, the social support network size also reflects the number of contacts of social resources. Lin (2005) thought that social resources had been unevenly distributed in the Pyramid shaped social structure. In a higher position in the social hierarchy, there are more social resources. And those who are marginalized can only get less social resources. Social status determines the amount of social resources people get. That is to say, there is a positive correlation between the social hierarchy and the possession and use of social resources.

Early this computer mediated communication is considered to be non-personal and non-social orientation. In the 80's, computer mediated communication (computer-mediated communication) mode, in the absence of language and non language tips, constrained by situational cues, and the communication delay, strong interpersonal interaction between uncertainty. Is generally considered less able to effectively transfer the personal and relationship information, therefore, it is difficult to establish relationships deeply personal. For example, individuals are supposed to behave properly only, or how to predict, explain their behavior. Therefore, rather than face to face communication, has greatly restricted the computer mediated communication to the development of interpersonal relationship, so it cannot establish a social network.

With the rapid development of computer network, network of communication interface is increasingly perfect, constantly bring forth the new through the old mode of communication network in a timely manner, in the individual communication, already from the morphology of BBS, e-mail communication technology gradually expanded into broader personal communication, convenient and efficient real-time network communication technology and the communication way is increasingly penetrated into the ordinary people daily life. Network in contemporary use is far beyond its initial production of use value. When facing a fashion of "play" concept has been daily use concept of alternative. It is undeniable, real-time network communication for most people who use the Internet, has become a part of one's life. "Virtual space" is no longer a noun a different world coldly, and there are clear and specific dimensions of experience and practical reference.

As a spectator, network members even if be strangers to each other, are more likely to help each other, members of the computers on the network not only tend to trust strangers, strangers or weakly linked object, often become a source of social support and recognition. The same, especially when the initial stage of establishing relations have common characteristics (such as geographical proximity), easier relations of trust, in other words, a stranger, but with the same pair of users, more easily through the new media network, establish and strengthen communication, to narrow the distance between each other. At the same time, the network group also gradually overcome the technological limitations, and internet users continue to learn how to use new ways to make the net more friendly. So someone created emoticons in cyberspace, with keyboard symbols to imitate more facial expressions, and use parallel language dialogue, let the keyboard typing revealed more social emotion. Therefore, CMC is not transitive relationships and personal messages, not limited by time and space conditions, it just needs more time to overcome the limitation of social emotional expression. Time is an important factor of network relationships, as long as there is no limit the interaction time, the expression of social emotion in the interactive network content will increase, the interpersonal relationship network so developed. So for the network users, interpersonal interactions do not completely depend on the face communication can be established between the tacit understanding or close, through the expression of keyboard symbol, have never met a stranger, not only can exchange information, can obtain a sense of belonging or social support.

If students in the paucity of resources allocated to the local, the more single is the lower social integration. We can know that the online survey research on foreign students is to understand important aspects of student for social integration.

2. INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS AND INTEGRATION OF STUDENTS

2.1 Data and Variable Description

This study from the Southwest University over more than 1000 students in the school had taken 250 samples in a questionnaire. Issue 250 questionnaires, questionnaires 248, 247 effective questionnaires. (The following data in the absence of special note are the results of the surveys and statistical analysis).

For international students, the social support resources can be received from their own loved ones, friends of any other country (except his own country and China) and China's friends and managers.

In China, a relatively unfamiliar environment, the students social support network will limit access to resources. Therefore, you can assume:

a. The more social support from international students' loved ones, the less integration into China.

b. The more social support from other countries' students, the less integration into China.

c. The more social support from China, the more integration into China.

We selected the students and the degree of integration into Chinese society as the dependent variable that is measured by international students' obtained sources of social support.

In the questionnaire, students' social support source options include spouse, parents, children, brothers, sisters, other relatives, friends, managers, other options and so on. In order to facilitate the analysis, we simplify these sources of social support into three categories: students to their relatives, friends in other countries, and Chinese friends.

On the dimension in the analysis, in accordance with the division of the social support networks of general acceptance, according to the nature of resources, we analyzed from daily life support, moral support and financial support. In this article, according to the character of economy incapable of self-care, there will be no analysis of its economic dimension.

In the independent variable, using the customs, school system analysis and language barriers affect the students' social support networks.

2.2 Life Support Network and the Integration of Students

In the questionnaire, when they are asked on a daily basis where to get help when they are in trouble, our findings are shown in Table 1:

Table 1
Foreign Students' Daily Life Support Network

Daily life for help when they are in trouble	Proportion (%)
Family	31.81
Same nationality students friends	22.73
Different nationality students friends	30.51
Chinese friends	6.65
Chinese managers	4.65
Others	3.65
Total	100

Data in Table 1 shows that foreign students mainly get help from family, same nationality students and different nationality students when they encounter difficulties in their daily life. The first is 31.81%, the second 22.73% and the third 30.51%, but the last two only 11.30%. It means that most foreign students obtain social support most from the same nationality, relatives and other countries friends,

less from Chinese friends and managers. It reflects that the students use fewer social resources in their daily lives and lack of local social networking support. That is to say, they not very well integrated into the local society.

2.3 Spiritual Support Network and the Integration of Students

In the questionnaire, when they are asked about the key where can I get help when you encounter trouble, our findings are shown in Table 2:

Table 2
Foreign students' Daily Spiritual Support Network

Source of comfort and care when it encounters a trouble	Proportion (%)
Family	25.12
Same nationality students friends	9.09
Different nationality students friends	50.24
Chinese friends	4.30
Chinese Managers	4.55
Others	6.7
Total	100

Data in Table 2 show that foreign students mainly get comfort and care from family, different nationality students and same nationality students when they encounter troubles in China. The first is 25.12%, the second 50.24% and the third 9.09%, but the last two only 8.85%. It means that most foreign students obtain emotional support most from the same nationality, relatives and other countries friends, less from Chinese friends and managers. That reflects that the emotional resources lacked local social networking support, that is to say, the foreign students are not very well integrated into the local society. In addition, compared with social support in everyday life, the Spiritual support of international students is more likely to rely on student friends of different nationalities, and also reflect their social networking small resources to acquire a single emotion.

3. CAUSES OF PROBLEMS

Through the data we find that foreign students smaller local social support networks and less social integration. The survey told that 77. 64% international students live together, only 22. 36% foreign students live with Chinese students. It shows that the foreign students and Chinese students are separated in a school live environment.

In the survey, when foreign students asked the main factors of making friends after coming to China, our findings are shown in Table 3:

Table 3
The Major Factors Influencing Students to Make Chinese Friends

The major factors influencing students to make Chinese friends	Proportion (%)
Language barrier	33.45
Organization of school system	50.09
Different customs	15.10
Others	1.36
Total	100

The Data shows that 33. 45% international students considered that the language barriers impact on making friends with Chinese, 50.9% international students thought that the unreasonable institutional arrangements limited making friends with Chinese, 15. 10% international students considered that different customs have influenced her association with Chinese. Among these factors, the institutional arrangements occupy a large proportion. In institutional arrangements, schools tend to place foreign student solely. This helps to the centralized management of foreign students, but reduces the activities and communication between them and Chinese students and teachers.

In order to illustrate this point, we also investigated the factors that affect their interaction with students from other countries, the survey results more support for the above points. As shown in Table 4:

Table 4
Main Factors Affecting Students to Interact

Factors that affect student interaction	Proportion (%)
Language barrier	19.13
Organization of school system	15.21
Different customs	56.55
Others	9.11
Total	100

As shown in Table 4, 19.13% international students considered that language barriers affected the interaction between the students, 15.21% international students considered that unreasonable institutional arrangement limited making friends with others, 56.55% international students considered that different customs affected students' interaction.

Obviously, when neglecting the difference of the overseas students' living condition, the proportion from language barrier and institutional arrangement in affecting international students' association drops heavily, and the difference of traditional culture becomes the biggest barrier instead.

CONCLUSION AND SOLUTION

Through this survey, we found social support networks for international students fragile. The engagement degree of international students is lower for single sources of social support which is far from home. The distinction between international students and Chinese students limits the contact of international students and Chinese students, and hinders the integration of international students in China. Through comparative study, we discovered that it can both bridge the geographical gap and reduce the language barrier to live together between local students and international students. Therefore, in the management of international students, universities should not establish international students' apartment buildings, but let international students blend into the school campus.

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