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The Study of Cross-Cultural Identity Construction and Identity Perception of Chinese International Students in the West

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Abstract: When Chinese students study in a foreign country, especially in the West, they are faced with different languages, new interpersonal interactions, and identity changes, which inevitably lead to a cross-cultural adaptation process brought about by cultural differences. In recent years, the trend of studying abroad has become more and more popular, especially in Western countries, but there are still many unresolved problems in studying abroad. Based on this, this article analyzes the problems in this adaptation process. This paper analyzes what significant changes will be brought by the perception of identity, and concludes that international students need to socialize with different people as much as possible and need to have a clear perception of the goals to ease the difficult adaptation process and establish new perceptions along with the environment, because the current. The main problems are the one-sided judgment of Chinese students abroad, the basic ability of individuals, and the environmental adaptation, based on this, this paper puts forward some suggestions such as the rational use of their available resources, to make intensive training for themselves, and can selectively participate in some supportive activities to assist themselves.

Keywords: Cross-Cultural, Identity Construction, Identity Perception, Identity Perception.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the trend of studying abroad has been greatly affected. With China being the world's largest exporter of international students, it is necessary to pay attention to the process of adaptation in the cross-cultural experience of Chinese overseas students and to study their personal identity construction and cognition in this process, which will help embed in a new life abroad in a positive direction. First of all, it is necessary to explain cross-cultural adaptation, when people come to a new cultural environment, they need to re-establish new interpersonal relationships to maintain a relatively stable state. Although personal identity has become perfect and mature during adolescent growth, identity is subject to change according to different environments, as in the case of studying in a foreign country [1]. During this adaptation process, due to factors such as the impact of a new culture, an individual's psychology will change and identity perceptions will emerge [1]. During this transitional period, Chinese students use a new language to communicate with locals to experience society shaping a new self. Chinese students can encounter negative situations such as indifferent treatment [2]. The impact of these pressures varies from person to person, and the question of whether to

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embrace new knowledge gladly or stick to stereotypes is one that students need to think about often. It is also about their ability to construct a new identity. In addition to self-reflection at the individual cognitive level, there are two other levels, the group level and the socio-cultural level, which will focus on people's behaviors in daily life. In short, overseas students will grow up with the ability to cope with these crises and gradually understand the cultural intervals. Students will also be more motivated to integrate into the local society if they are in an open and inclusive environment. However, in a biased environment, Chinese students are likely to find themselves collectively dependent on students from their home country. Intercultural communication among Chinese students is a multidimensional and dynamic process that requires not only individual support but also group and social support, a process that not only facilitates the broadening of the group's horizons and the development of more opportunities but also facilitates the economic and cultural changes in different parts of the host country. Based on this, this paper uses qualitative research methods to explore and study how Chinese students construct and change their identity perceptions in Western countries of study from different angles and levels.

2. Importance

In today's society, where countries around the world are striving to globalize higher education and the number of international students is still on the rise after COVID-19, the group of international students has proved to be of great importance [3]. Students want to study abroad mainly for learning, and some even set the long-term goal of working abroad or even staying permanently in a foreign country, returning international students contribute to the educational environment in their home countries. As for the country of study, attracting more international students is very beneficial for the circulation of the national currency, they have become the main group of new economic interests, and the cultural look of the country will be publicized to gain more influence [4]. As the number one study-abroad exporter, China must prepare in advance for the situation of intercultural adaptation of Chinese students outside their country [5]. Both psychological and personal preparation are important challenges to focus on, as normative customs and languages differ from country to country, and it is necessary to pay appropriate attention to this for the sake of the international future. In addition to the problem of language miscommunication, which every international student must experience, the anxiety and fear of being alone in a foreign country for the first time can prompt Chinese students to socialize with others in a desire to find a sense of belonging [5]. Students with a low sense of belonging experience high levels of anxiety and depression, which create barriers to not only academic but also interpersonal issues, and do not get the desired benefits from their study abroad experience, which is the last thing anyone wants [5]. It was found that Chinese students usually look for the same national identity, i.e., a group of people who are also from China, which is not a bad thing, but it helps Chinese students to reduce the sense of isolation and maintain their original identity; however, if they only stay with people of the same culture in their home country and do not communicate with people of foreign cultural backgrounds, Chinese students who are subjected to a new culture shock may not have the possibility to reshape their identity [6]. The probability that Chinese international students may reshape their identities after a new cultural shock becomes extremely rare, and the integration in reshaping can make an individual's identity more resilient and adaptable, which is a good thing that cannot be ignored [5]. Identity construction helps Chinese students to maintain a dual identity or even more, which means that individuals can maintain their original cultural roots, and their minds are transformed through impact and reflection to be more tolerant and understanding of new things [5]. International students individually broaden their horizons in the transition period of intercultural adaptation, achieving the original purpose of studying abroad, while at the same time, the social and cultural integration of the local population and international students in their home country will increase the awareness of cultural diversity compared

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to previous contacts and gradually evolve internationalization, which is a win-win situation for both groups [5]. It would be reasonable for the state to intervene to a greater or lesser extent in response to this outcome.

3. Current Issues

3.1. Cultural Barriers

Before preparing Chinese students for their initial orientation abroad and the construction of a new identity, it is important to recognize some of the socio-cultural difficulties that are being faced today [5]. In addition to the academic language difficulties mentioned above, there are three main categories of attention: ethnocultural, economic, and psychological. First of all, it is important to understand the different cultures, which according to the political trends of each country is now an important issue for the people of the world. Because of the global trend of diversity, people are aware of and respect the differences in ethnicity, religion, and culture, but there are still people who look at international students with prejudice based on their previous history [5]. Especially in the post-pandemic era, there are concerns and issues related to the friction of other countries' positions, making it difficult for international students to establish friendly relationships with students from host countries due to cultural discrimination and prejudice [5].

3.2. Mental Problem

The second point is the psychological problem of international students, as mentioned above, the difference between China and the West. For example, the way of learning in the classroom and the things they encounter in life can give international students a lot of difficulties and challenges at the beginning [5]. Culture shock has a far greater impact than one might expect, and the homesickness that arises when one first arrives in a foreign country can be very strong. But once in a foreign country, for better or for worse, it means that students have to learn, get used to, and adapt to the local society, culture, and way of thinking, and people have to realize that the cultural gaps at the root of the problem cannot be eliminated [5]. Socio-cultural problems are also related to language barriers. English is the world's number one popular lingua franca, and many countries where students study abroad use English as their mother tongue or first language of communication, although with local accents [7]. Many students are still unable to use their language skills proficiently to communicate with others, and this exclusion often creates a feeling of isolation, not only in the classroom but also in life, and the alienation felt by international students becomes even greater [3].

3.3. Economic Problem

The last and more realistic point is the economic reason. If Chinese students want to get a chance to get a higher education, apart from their ability, there is also a more realistic financial ability [8]. In popular Western countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, tuition fees for international students are often two to three times higher than those for local students, and many families will even take out loans to buy a house or a car to pay the high tuition fees [5]. As a result, students are under great psychological pressure and feel that they have the obligation and responsibility to get results that match the capital they have paid for after completing their studies [9]. For example, students from this kind of family will choose to study more practical or specialized subjects, and they do not have more spare capacity to explore different possibilities. In life, living expenses and the interpersonal communication gap between rich and poor will make people produce more anxiety, which is the student's academic pressure in addition to the more people feel trapped in

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a difficult situation an important reason [9]. People's low self-esteem and sense of shame also prevent them from talking to others or asking for help [5].

4. Suggestions

4.1. Flexibility in Utilizing Resources

Firstly, regarding cultural issues, especially the language barrier in foreign countries, it takes years and months of accumulation and training to achieve fluent communication with locals, so international students should be fully prepared [8]. For example, students can set goals every day to make a suitable plan for daily extracurricular learning, whether it is English or other languages, and make reasonable use of the available resources to improve slowly at their own pace [8]. Regarding homesickness, although it cannot be solved directly, international students can still participate in diversified campus activities to help them distract themselves and meet new people and things. If students have problems on campus that they feel students can not solve with outsiders, they can take advantage of professional support opportunities [8]. Generally, universities have organizations that help students, such as on-campus mental health and on-campus study tutorials, which students are free to choose to attend to help and improve themselves [8].

4.2. Socialization

Talking and socializing with people students have something to say to each other can also ease the feeling of discomfort that international students feel when they first arrive here. Finding compatriots to gain a sense of belonging is also a good choice in the initial period of adaptation, and sharing their experiences and ideas with others without barriers can calm the anxiety of Chinese students and stimulate their curiosity about the outside world. On campus, it is important to socialize with others in the classroom. For example, participating in group work and school club activities or volunteering are ways to socialize with others. In addition, students can focus on keeping in touch with their families through the Internet, increasing the frequency of communication and phone calls, etc., which can bring a certain amount of psychological comfort even though they are not able to be with them directly.

4.3. Have a Clear Understanding

Regarding the economic problems, the best suggestion is to plan the real statistics of each family to study outside the expenses and the family income to make a good comparison of the trade-offs [5]. Of course, international students can apply for scholarships or other on-campus programs to reduce the cost of tuition, and they can also find part-time jobs that do not take away from their studies to subsidize their living expenses, which, in the best interest of the students, is also a way of accumulating work experience and exercising their abilities for their future social work, but this exercise usually takes a lot of time and effort [9]. Regarding the rejection of international students from the host country, there is a need for more appeals and rules to protect the feelings of international students, more publicity to eliminate stereotypes of foreigners, and more practically, the formulation of new policies to give foreign students better preferential treatment and benefits [10]. The best way to defend oneself against this is to maintain one's cultural self-confidence and not to be denigrated by foreigners. Building diversity and respect for all is a goal people should all aim for, and people need to be aware of the facts and cultures they interact with to be able to speak plainly and make their judgments instead of jumping to conclusions.

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5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the change in identity perceptions of Chinese students is due to the need to configure new identity elements to maintain personal emotional support such as a sense of self-esteem, uniqueness, and a sense of belonging to help people maintain coherence. The inclusiveness or lack of inclusiveness of the environment will make Chinese students want to build new identities, giving them new cultural shocks that will transform their thinking and make them want to become their ideal selves. Chinese students still have a deep sense of pride and identification with their home countries, although some Westerners still have negative thoughts about Chinese students, which has psychologically harmed some of them. The significance of this study is to help Chinese students better understand the difficulties of studying abroad, and hope that countries can strengthen the inclusiveness of the study environment to maintain the phenomenon of diversity and jointly promote cultural and economic exchanges. Because of the growing trend of Chinese students studying abroad, which requires students to experience the trials and tribulations of cross-cultural use, discovering new perceptions and establishing new identities can make it easier for people to cross this process, but there are still difficulties, in which cultural psychological and economic issues are the most prevalent, and this paper suggests that it is best to utilize more resources at hand to help students to have more interactions with the outside world, and better yet to think deeply and plan for their futures. This paper suggests that more resources should be used to help students make more connections with the outside world and, ideally, to think deeply about their future.

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