



Exploration of the Internationalization Path of Traditional Chinese Medicine Education Under Cross-cultural Background

Haibin Wu^{1,2,*}, Bomin Cheng¹, Shiyong Zhang¹, Zhuochao Liu¹, Yanping Zhu¹, Dongcai Wang¹

¹Shenzhen Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital, Shenzhen 518033, Guangdong, China.

²The Fourth Clinical School, Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine, Guangzhou 510006, Guangdong, China.

How to cite this paper: Haibin Wu, Bomin Cheng, Shiyong Zhang, Zhuochao Liu, Yanping Zhu, Dongcai Wang. (2024). Exploration of the Internationalization Path of Traditional Chinese Medicine Education Under Cross-cultural Background. *The Educational Review, USA*, 8(11), 1322-1325. DOI: 10.26855/er.2024.11.007

Received: October 11, 2024

Accepted: November 9, 2024

Published: December 6, 2024

Corresponding author: Haibin Wu, Shenzhen Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital, Shenzhen 518033, Guangdong, China; The Fourth Clinical School, Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine, Guangzhou 510006, Guangdong, China.

Abstract

With the transformation of medical models, traditional Chinese medicine is receiving increasing attention and importance internationally, and international education in traditional Chinese medicine is gradually developing from popularization to depth. Not only are there more and more people studying traditional Chinese medicine in China, but also some traditional Chinese medicine education institutions have emerged in various countries around the world. This is undoubtedly of great significance for promoting the internationalization of traditional Chinese medicine education. However, it is important to note that many individuals who aspire to learn traditional Chinese medicine often recognize only its efficacy and technical components. They may struggle to accept its cultural connotations and may even adopt a skeptical attitude toward it. This cannot fundamentally maintain the characteristics and advantages of traditional Chinese medicine education in the process of internationalization. Therefore, cultural factors are deep-seated factors that affect the internationalization of traditional Chinese medicine education. In the international education of traditional Chinese medicine, it is necessary to grasp the actual situation of students and teach them according to their aptitude; improve teaching methods and reflect personalized teaching; promote traditional Chinese medicine culture and create a traditional atmosphere.

Keywords

Cross-cultural; Traditional Chinese Medicine; Education Internationalization

Introduction

Traditional Chinese medicine has won the love of people all over the world with its unique theoretical system and safe therapeutic effects. At present, traditional Chinese medicine has been recognized and accepted by people of different races and cultural backgrounds. Traditional Chinese medicine has spread to more than 130 countries and regions around the world, and more and more people are coming to China to study traditional Chinese medicine. Medical colleges cultivating foreign students of traditional Chinese medicine can not only spread professional knowledge and skills, but also strengthen international exchanges and promote friendly relations with other countries. In recent years, traditional Chinese medicine education has shown a good trend internationally. Every year, various traditional Chinese medicine colleges and universities across the country cultivate a large number of international composite traditional Chinese medicine talents. The number of Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and foreign students studying traditional Chinese medicine in China has been increasing year by year, second only to the number of students studying Chinese in China.

1. Cultural factors in the internationalization of traditional Chinese medicine education

The foundation of traditional Chinese medicine is a cultural concept and way of thinking formed based on the knowledge of literature, history, philosophy, and other disciplines since the Spring and Autumn Periods, especially since the Qin and Han Dynasties. It is a Chinese culture formed through the comprehensive analysis and long-term accumulation of a large amount of information from astronomy, geography, and the holistic view of human emotions by many sages—the holistic culture of heaven, earth, and man. Traditional Chinese medicine is a medical achievement that is based on the full absorption of various nutrients from Chinese traditional culture. It is a part of the life sciences, and its scientific and humanistic spirit is increasingly evident in the process of transitioning from traditional medicine to modern medicine (Bai L., 2024). However, in reality, the theory of traditional Chinese medicine is often questioned by Western medicine, and the development of traditional Chinese medicine is still difficult to integrate into mainstream medicine. One of the important reasons is the lack of profound understanding of the cultural connotations on which this medicine is based. Therefore, in order to promote the internationalization of traditional Chinese medicine education, it is necessary to start from a deep understanding of Chinese traditional culture.

From the perspective of the gestation and formation process of traditional Chinese medicine, for thousands of years, it has been established along the principles of ancient Chinese philosophy, such as the theory of vitality, holistic view, and the unity of yin and yang opposition, to establish its own complete theoretical system from the theory of Tibetan phenomena, the theory of syndrome differentiation and treatment, to diagnosis, treatment, and pharmacology. Throughout its theory, it has always been permeated with the viewpoints of the relationship between heaven and man, organs, and form and spirit, examining the complex relationship between yin and yang and Tibetan phenomena in the human body from multiple perspectives of the super giant system of heaven, earth (including nature and society), human, and spirit (spirit). It is precisely because traditional Chinese medicine is deeply rooted in the soil of Chinese traditional culture that strengthening the transmission and cultivation of culture plays a fundamental role in the internationalization of traditional Chinese medicine education. Only those who understand Chinese culture can have a more accurate and profound understanding of the spiritual essence of traditional Chinese medicine (Xia, X. X. *et al.*, 2019). Only by immersing this education in a cultural atmosphere can learners truly gain insights. This is precisely the reason why people emphasize that those who study traditional Chinese medicine should have a taste of Chinese medicine. This is not only an important link in maintaining the national characteristics and advantages of traditional Chinese medicine, but also an inherent requirement for the special position of traditional Chinese medicine in building a biopsychosocial medical model.

2. The internationalization path of traditional Chinese medicine education under cross-cultural background

2.1 Highlighting the role of cultural transmission

In the process of internationalizing higher education in traditional Chinese medicine, it is necessary to start with traditional Chinese cultural concepts and thinking forms, based on the transmission of Chinese culture, using various forms of education as means, and aiming to have a solid theoretical foundation in traditional Chinese medicine, to construct an international model that integrates culture, education, and medicine, and cultivate qualified talents who can adapt to international development (Zheng Y., 2018). Firstly, courses on ancient Chinese philosophy and other humanities knowledge should be added to lay a cultural foundation for students to learn and master the theoretical knowledge of traditional Chinese medicine. It is necessary to establish ancient Chinese philosophy as a fundamental course in the field of traditional Chinese medicine so that students can learn to analyze and understand the theories of traditional Chinese medicine using traditional philosophical ideas, as this is a methodology for studying and researching traditional Chinese medicine. This is of great significance for cultivating students' thinking in traditional Chinese medicine. For students who have received modern scientific knowledge education since childhood, they find it difficult to understand and accept traditional Chinese medicine theory when they first encounter it and even have doubts about it. The reason is that they always use modern scientific thinking to understand traditional Chinese medicine theory, which can only lead to misinterpretation of traditional Chinese medicine theory. In addition, the early separation of arts and sciences in secondary education has also led to a lack of humanistic knowledge among some science students. This further increases the difficulty for them to learn and master the theories of traditional Chinese medicine. Therefore, adjusting the knowledge structure and consolidating the cultural foundation are necessary to maintain the characteristics of traditional Chinese medicine when imparting knowledge abroad, cultivating high-quality international talents in traditional Chinese medicine with rich theoretical knowledge and solid traditional cultural foundation (Zhang, Y. *et al.*, 2018).

Secondly, efforts should be made to create an atmosphere of Chinese culture, so that students who are immersed in it,

especially foreign students who come to China to study traditional Chinese medicine, can be surrounded by a strong Chinese cultural atmosphere and appreciate the true essence of traditional Chinese medicine theory in the influence of Chinese traditional culture; Experience the charm of traditional Chinese culture through the study of traditional Chinese medicine theory (Xie, B. *et al.*, 2021). The creation of a cultural atmosphere should include three levels: first, academic atmosphere. We should take advantage of the humanistic advantages of universities and actively create a cultural and academic atmosphere. We should regularly hold academic presentations on humanities and traditional Chinese medicine at various levels, invite domestic and foreign experts to give lectures at the school, strengthen academic exchanges between schools, and provide students with high-level humanistic and professional knowledge. Secondly, the living atmosphere. We should closely integrate classroom teaching with extracurricular activities and carry out various campus cultural activities with rich ethnic styles and cultural characteristics. Enable students to unconsciously receive cultural influence and enhance their cultural heritage through various activities. Thirdly, the garden atmosphere. A campus with elegant scenery is an important aspect that cannot be ignored in attracting foreign students. The gardens of traditional Chinese medicine colleges should have their own personality, and the architectural style should reflect the ancient and elegant ethnic characteristics; efforts should be made to beautify the garden with the words 'quiet' and 'peaceful', and more medicinal herbs and flowers should be used to decorate the campus (Li, M. Y. & Liang, J., 2020). This not only provides students with a place to cultivate their character and cultivate their sentiments, but also consolidates their knowledge of the ubiquitous medicinal herbs and flowers, and allows them to experience the charm of traditional Chinese culture in the unique style of the campus.

2.2 Cultural inheritance helps with internationalization

Firstly, it is necessary to strengthen students' cultural innovation awareness and regard cultivating an innovative spirit as the key to transforming traditional culture and building a modern spirit of traditional Chinese medicine education. The vitality of culture lies in continuous innovation, and the key to cultural innovation lies in the innovative consciousness possessed by people as cultural subjects. The modernization and internationalization of higher education in traditional Chinese medicine also rely on innovative consciousness. Traditional culture is undoubtedly an important foundation for the formation and development of traditional Chinese medicine theory, but the vague view of nature in Chinese Taoism has closed off people's thirst for knowledge and creativity; The Confucian concept of compromise, fairness, and harmony in the doctrine of the mean has left profound traces on the thinking mode of traditional Chinese medicine and influenced its development. Therefore, in order for traditional Chinese medicine to survive and flourish, it must be unified with the pulse of the times and resonate with the pace of development. Traditional Chinese medicine education should constantly adjust its knowledge structure and strive to cultivate and shape students' creative thinking in response to the changing and developing world. On the one hand, it is necessary to cultivate students' ability to master the methods of applying modern science and modern information means to acquire new knowledge. While continuously expanding their knowledge base, emphasis is placed on imparting scientific methodology knowledge to students, including learning methodology, research methodology, dialectical logical thinking methodology, and so on. On the other hand, through university education, students can establish a healthy personality, enabling them to independently absorb various reasonable spiritual wealth in the field of human science and culture, and be good at integrating and comprehensively utilizing diverse cultures. In addition, it is necessary to promote the era shaping of Chinese cultural traditions and traditional Chinese medicine theories based on the needs of human health and the development trend of modern medical science and use this as a basis to construct a new educational culture and humanistic spirit that not only has national characteristics but also meets the requirements of international development (Xia, X. X. *et al.*, 2019).

Secondly, strengthening the exchange, research, and comparison of Chinese and Western cultures is a necessary condition for achieving innovation in traditional Chinese medicine education and going global. Different cultural backgrounds breed different medical theories. Therefore, it is of great significance to impart the theoretical system of Chinese medicine to foreigners with different cultural backgrounds and educational concepts. In addition to exploring methods, it is also important to strengthen the exchange, research, and comparison of Chinese and Western cultures. Any vibrant culture in history is not a closed system, but rather achieves self-renewal and self-development through the continuous absorption of heterogeneous cultures. The theory of traditional Chinese medicine itself has the characteristics of cultural inclusiveness and interdisciplinary infiltration. To guide students to fully absorb and utilize the research results and methods of advanced Eastern and Western cultures and modern science, conduct scientific analysis of traditional culture and traditional Chinese medicine theory, enrich traditional Chinese medicine theory with modern scientific theory, inject vitality into the profound traditional culture of the times, endow the reasonable connotation of traditional Chinese medicine theory with modern scientific spirit, and make traditional Chinese medicine

Pharmaceutical theory and methods for diagnosing and treating various diseases are constantly becoming more

scientific and perfect with the development of practice and the times, truly becoming an integral part of modern science and realizing their rightful value. This is also the key to whether traditional Chinese medicine education can move towards internationalization.

2.3 Teaching reform, highlighting personalization

Foreign students come from different countries with varying backgrounds in medical education, resulting in different ways of thinking and learning methods. Most of them are proactive in learning and have active thinking, and the traditional indoctrination teaching method is no longer suitable. Mohammed is a typical example. As he is the only student, face-to-face and one-on-one teaching methods can be adopted during the teaching session. In addition to teaching essential knowledge points, various teaching forms such as discussion-based, questioning-based, and Q&A-based can be used. When teaching edema, if you ask, "How is the edema you see treated?" His answer is mostly Western medicine treatment methods. Further questioning, "How is traditional Chinese medicine treated?" He also knows some, but not systematically. The author explains the knowledge in the book and the supplementary materials prepared. This interactive teaching method can guide students to actively think, analyze problems, and explore patterns, thereby deepening understanding and improving teaching effectiveness. Homework can also be assigned after class, and interesting case analysis questions can be used, which not only deepens students' understanding of knowledge but also increases their interest in traditional Chinese medicine, achieving the effect of mutual benefit between teaching and learning. Due to the active learning attitude of Saudi students, the author continuously improves teaching methods and enhances teaching quality. At the same time, in the discussion-based teaching, the foreign medical knowledge and observations he discussed also inspired the author. This personalized teaching embodies the principles of scientific, rigorous, and friendly teaching. Mohammed basically mastered the theoretical knowledge of traditional Chinese medicine internal medicine at the end of the semester.

3. Conclusion

World medicine is rich, including the treasure of traditional Chinese medicine; traditional Chinese medicine is precious and enriches the essence of world medicine. When traditional Chinese medicine goes abroad and is recognized, accepted, and understood by more people, the internationalization process of traditional Chinese medicine will continue to advance. During this period, various difficulties or challenges will be encountered, and the first and foremost is to overcome language and cultural barriers. Therefore, the internationalization process of traditional Chinese medicine and the development of its English translation are closely related. When the two promote each other and form a virtuous cycle, the magnificent transformation of traditional Chinese medicine from ethnic medicine to world medicine will have the most solid foundation support.

References

- Bai, L. (2024). Thoughts on International Communication and Development Cooperation of Traditional Chinese Medicine: A Case Study of Thailand. *Industrial Technology Innovation*, 6(01), 33-35.
- Li, M. Y., & Liang, J. (2020). A Brief Discussion on the Classroom Teaching Art of Traditional Chinese Medicine English Teaching for International Students in China. *Hunan Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 36(09), 112-113+144. DOI: 10.16808/j.cnki.issn1003-7705.2020.09.048.
- Xia, X. X., Sun, L. Q., Hu, S., et al. (2019). Application of the Performance Evaluation Model Combining Formative Evaluation and Summative Evaluation in Traditional Chinese Medicine Teaching for International Students. *Modern Distance Education of Traditional Chinese Medicine in China*, 17(22), 32-35.
- Xia, X. X., Sun, L. Q., Hu, S., et al. (2019). Application of the Performance Evaluation Model Combining Formative Evaluation and Summative Evaluation in Traditional Chinese Medicine Teaching for International Students. *Modern Distance Education of Traditional Chinese Medicine in China*, 17(22), 32-35.
- Xie, B., Xian, S. X., Yang, Z. Q., et al. (2021). Reform of Traditional Chinese Medicine Education in Medical Teaching Teams. *PLA Hospital Management Journal*, 28(08), 788-790. DOI: 10.16770/J.cnki.1008-9985.2021.08.032.
- Zhang, Y., Wang, S. S., Zhang, D. Y., et al. (2018). A Brief Analysis of the Differences in Traditional Chinese Medicine Education between Australian and Chinese Universities. *Chinese Journal of Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine*, 38(10), 1250-1252.
- Zheng, Y. (2018). Research on the Modern Transformation of Traditional Chinese Medicine System. Shanxi University.