

The Construction of Acculturation Model for Cross-Cultural Adaptation of Ethnic Minority College Students

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Abstract: The educational management and service for minority university students are significant components of ideological and political education in universities, which is a crucial phase for consolidating and casting the consciousness of the Chinese nation as a community. Based on the current state of education and management services for minority students in universities, this paper analyzes the acculturation model for the cross-cultural adaptation of minority university students from a theoretical perspective. Drawing from practical experiences, it explores ways to further improve the cross-cultural adaptation mechanism in universities, enhance students' cross-cultural adaptation abilities, and provide effective pathways to strengthen the ideological and political education of ethnic minority college students.

Keywords: Acculturation Model, Cross-Cultural Adaptation, Ethnic Minority College Students, Ideological and Political Education.

1. Introduction

In the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the Chinese nation has entered its best period of development. President Xi Jinping emphasized the need to promote extensive interactions, exchanges, and integration among all ethnic groups to advance modernization with Chinese characteristics through the great unity of the Chinese nation. Ethnic minority college students represent the new force and backbone among ethnic minorities, playing an indispensable role in promoting interactions, exchanges, and integration among ethnic groups. Enhancing the level of education and management for ethnic minority college students is key to promoting ethnic unity and progress. The state has given unprecedented attention to the cultivation of minority talents, resulting in a growing proportion of ethnic minority college students in higher education and significantly enhanced cultural diversity in universities. Facing new circumstances, how to innovate educational management models and provide more precise services becomes a core issue that universities urgently need to explore and address. Currently, universities generally lack in-depth understanding of the cross-cultural adaptation status and intercultural ability development of ethnic minority college students. There is a lack of systematic and effective cross-cultural adaptation mechanisms, leaving room for improvement in promoting and ensuring students' personal development and healthy growth. Based on the analysis of the current situation of education and management for ethnic minority college students, this paper discusses the theoretical framework for their cross-cultural adaptation under the perspective of acculturation, aiming to construct an acculturation model that strengthens cross-cultural adaptation for the benefit of promoting education and management services for ethnic minority college students.

2. Status Quo of Education Management Services for Ethnic Minority College Students

2.1. Student Level Analysis

Ethnic minority college students possess certain uniqueness. The subjects of ideological and political education are ethnic minority college students, who exhibit distinctiveness and complexity due to factors such as cultural identity, access to educational resources, and language communication. Ethnic minority college students demonstrate pronounced subjectivity, with particularly strong self-awareness and ethnic consciousness, which becomes especially prominent when they enter the higher education stage. In the university stage, accompanied by increased social integration and fundamental changes in living environments, these two types of consciousness undergo significant reshaping and deepening among ethnic minority college students. Previously, due to physiological and psychological maturity constraints, their self-awareness was in a nascent state, while they mostly lived in ethnic enclaves in their hometowns, immersed in the lifestyle characteristic of their own ethnic group. They naturally developed a sense of closeness and identification with their own behavior, language, habits, and those of fellow ethnic members, during which self-awareness was not significantly prominent, while ethnic consciousness naturally formed. However, upon entering university, away from familiar surroundings and facing collisions with diverse cultures, ethnic minority college students' cognitive perceptions were challenged and expanded like never before. During this process, whether actively seeking or passively accepting, they began to engage in profound reflections and explorations of their self-identity and ethnic roots. Although ethnic minority college students display a positive state in terms of ideology and politics, there are issues such as inadequate understanding of ethnic relations and ethnic policies, limited media literacy skills, and the immaturity of values in their youth, making them highly susceptible to environmental acculturation. Therefore, ethnic

minority college students entering university face a relatively intense period of ideological fluctuation, a critical stage for the awakening of self-awareness and ethnic consciousness [1], and universities should pay attention to the role mode of the "acculturation" process caused by contact with different cultures, which leads to changes in existing cultural patterns.

2.2. School Level Analysis

The main body of ideological and political education work for ethnic minority college students is the ideological and political education workers of universities. These workers must follow general methods and principles of ideological and political education while recognizing the complexity and uniqueness of their role as the subject of ideological and political education for ethnic minority college students. They should pay attention to, understand, and explore the distinctions and separation between the subjects and objects in the process of ideological and political education for ethnic minority college students. Currently, the cross-cultural adaptation model in universities has certain limitations. Due to the characteristics of the ethnic composition of students and education workers, the main force for accurate education of ethnic minority college students lies in the student affairs team, lacking systematicness and overall perspective. Following the general educational and teaching rules and growth patterns for students, such as curriculum teaching, cultural and sports activities, psychological counseling, employment guidance, etc., does not truly meet the intrinsic needs of students. Moreover, the complexity of public opinion environments and the diversification of ideological values objectively require university ideological and political education workers to attach importance to the timeliness of their work and flexibility requirements. Therefore, how to innovate through educational practices, bridge the gap between the intrinsic needs of ethnic minority college students and the methods of ideological and political education work, and alleviate the cross-cultural adaptation pressure caused by ethnic diversity and different political education backgrounds among ethnic minority college students is an issue that universities need to focus on.

3. Analysis of the Acculturation Model Theory

3.1. Acculturation and Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Early cultural adaptation studies were conducted by anthropologists and sociologists, primarily focusing on changes at the group level in cultural interactions, such as alterations in economic status, social structure, and political organization within cultural groups; changes in lifestyles and values among different cultural groups. In 1936, American anthropologists Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton, and Melville Herskovits provided the earliest definition of acculturation in their publication 'Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation'. They defined acculturation as "the phenomenon of change in the original cultural patterns of one or both cultural groups and their individual members during continuous and direct contact"[2]. Cross-cultural adaptation primarily refers to the relatively stable outcome that individuals or groups eventually form in response to external demands, i.e., during the process of rearranging and adapting to life in a new social-cultural environment (the acculturation process). Cross-cultural psychologist John Berry studied the

relationship between acculturation and cross-cultural adaptation (outcomes). He believed that understanding acculturation should encompass both the cultural group and the psychological individual levels. Individuals undergoing acculturation go through a series of varying degrees of behavioral changes and employ various acculturation stress coping strategies to gradually reach a relatively stable state of psychological and socio-cultural adaptation. This provides insight for constructing an acculturation model for cross-cultural adaptation among ethnic minority college students in campus settings.

3.2. Cultural Cognition

Based on educational management practices, when interviewed students discuss their cross-cultural experiences, they often compare the similarities and differences between campus culture and their original culture. The cognitive process and evaluation of a new culture by ethnic minority college students is a comparative process between their original culture and the campus culture, and this comparison is a spontaneous, long-term, dynamic, and continuously revised psychological process. This process is mainly characterized by its stages, which can be divided into pre-enrollment cultural impressions and post-enrollment personal experiences. Before enrollment, students have rather general and less accurate impressions of the country where they will study abroad. There tends to be a tendency towards stereotyping or fixed perceptions, with information mainly acquired from classrooms, interactions with Han teachers and students, and various media channels. Although the initial cultural impressions formed may deviate from the actual situation on campus, most ethnic minority college students report that this prior knowledge helps alleviate their psychological anxiety and uncertainty during the early days of enrollment, allowing them to adapt to the campus environment more quickly. This indicates that specialized educational guidance before enrollment and in the early stages of enrollment is essential work. After enrollment, as the time spent on campus increases and students gain real-life exposure to new cultures, previously held cultural impressions are subject to questioning, challenging, negation, or affirmation and acceptance. When cultural impressions align closely with actual experiences, students reaffirm and apply these impressions, thereby avoiding greater pressures in thought and behavior. However, when cultural impressions conflict with actual experiences, they are questioned or adjusted. Moreover, ethnic minority college students' cognition and assessment of campus culture are not static but change multiple times in response to increased cultural knowledge, adjustments in ideological perspectives, or changes in situational factors. Such changes are typically realized through the understanding of specific events and subsequent reflection, leading to deeper contemplation of one's original culture and reevaluation of the new culture. Based on this, students will correspondingly alter or adjust their attitudes and behaviors to better fit into the campus culture.

3.3. Acculturation Attitude

According to scholars Ward and Berry, the proportion of individuals entering a new environment who adopt different acculturation strategies varies depending on their specific cultural background and the characteristics of the environment they are in. The integration strategy is the most

common and is generally considered the healthiest and most effective adaptation strategy, allowing individuals to maintain their cultural identity while adapting to the new culture [3,4]. In practice, ethnic minority college students tend to prefer the integration strategy, yet in actual acculturation scenarios, they more frequently resort to separation strategies. For instance, in interpersonal relationships, ethnic minority college students often harbor idealistic expectations; however, due to neglecting potential difficulties, they choose avoidance after encountering setbacks. In educational activities and daily interactions, students predominantly focus on living conditions, academic courses, part-time jobs, and other issues, rarely addressing interpersonal relationship problems. Additionally, there is a lack of relevant education and training provided by schools. Furthermore, when ethnic minority college students fall short of their ideal expectations during cross-cultural adaptation, they often attribute it to language barriers, lifestyle differences, cultural disparities, among other reasons, potentially overlooking personal traits and the specifics of the situations at hand. While some students are aware of the causes and know how to act, they lack the ability to translate their attitudes into actions.

In an acculturation context, an individual's attribution of the causes of events significantly influences how they understand and interpret their own acculturation experiences [5]. Therefore, when attributing to external contextual factors such as upbringing environments, long-standing habits, and ethnic backgrounds, individuals perceive themselves as lacking control over the acculturation process, leading to more passive coping mechanisms. Conversely, when attributing to internal personal factors like inadequate language proficiency, insufficient cultural learning, and lack of practical experience, individuals are more likely to employ proactive and positive coping strategies. Consequently, the process of ethnic minority college students actively adapting to a new culture on campus involves selecting acculturation strategies and practicing skills for managing cross-cultural stress and conflicts. Active coping facilitates the choice of positive acculturation strategies and further self-practice. In optimizing the acculturation model, it is crucial to guide students in appropriately attributing difficulties in cross-cultural adaptation, assist them in positively reinterpreting the causes of stressful events, adjust their cognitive reference groups, reassess their own behaviors, and recalibrate their expectations.

3.4. Campus Support

The campus support network is a critically important environmental factor influencing the adaptation of ethnic minority college students. From numerous research cases, the majority of ethnic minority students report receiving various forms of assistance and support from the school in terms of emotional, informational, and material resources during their university years. However, the functional characteristics of campus support differ, each with its own emphasis. Key points of interest include: first, ethnic minority college students are more inclined toward internal cohesion, with ethnic peers offering superior emotional, living, and academic support, including family and friends not located on campus. Second, ethnic minority college students who share experiences from high school or preparatory studies tend to have stronger bonds, resulting in enhanced spiritual and material support. Third, ethnic minority college students often compare the help and advice received from campus locals

with what their ethnic peers would provide in similar circumstances. Fourth, assistance obtained from campus locals can significantly reduce anxiety and unease stemming from the new cultural environment, although this usually requires proactive and explicit expression of need. Fifth, ethnic minority college students highly value the support from ethnic minority teachers, demonstrating strong emotional reliance on preparatory class counselors and ethnic minority administrative staff. Sixth, the incorporation of ethnic elements by the campus in dining, living, festival, and educational activity settings leaves a profound impression on ethnic minority college students. It is evident that ethnic minority college students seek to construct and maintain their social networks to secure diverse forms of support. A well-functioning campus support network can alleviate their cross-cultural adaptation pressures. In optimizing the acculturation model, it is necessary to establish communication platforms, refine service mechanisms, and assist them in maintaining mental and physical health in a new cultural setting, engaging in effective social interactions, and achieving personal development and growth.

3.5. Self-Reconstruction

Cultural identity plays a pivotal role in the process of self-renewal, particularly when individuals undergo significant life transitions or cross-cultural migrations. This process involves how individuals redefine and understand themselves in a new cultural setting and integrate their cultural heritage with new cultural elements to form a richer, more multifaceted self-concept. In educational practice, the self-renewal process of ethnic minority college students can be summarized as cultural reflection, cultural awareness, and intercultural identification. Firstly, cultural reflection involves the repeated, continuous, and constantly revised thinking, analysis, and summarization by ethnic minority college students regarding the causes, processes, and outcomes of specific cross-cultural events they experience and feel. Compared to before enrollment and the initial period, ethnic minority college students exhibit a markedly strengthened inclination towards independence. To better manage social interactions and interpersonal relationships in cross-cultural contexts, they observe, imitate, and selectively accept the campus's mindset and behavioral norms, adjusting and improving aspects of their self-concept such as "inward orientation," "strong dependence on others," and "neglect of self-worth." Secondly, cultural awareness. As cultural reflection and awareness deepen in cross-cultural scenarios, ethnic minority college students gain a renewed and profound understanding of their original culture and the campus culture, signifying the awakening of consciousness towards the Chinese nation as a community. Awareness is a prerequisite for identification, and cultural identity is founded upon cultural awareness [6]. During this process, they develop a more open, equal, and mutually respectful attitude towards handling differences among various ethnic cultures, viewing their own traditional ethnic culture with an objective and developmental perspective. They achieve a cultural identity perspective that emphasizes innovation in tradition, progress in learning, and development in comparison. Thirdly, intercultural identification. Establishing intercultural identification should represent the most desirable stage for ethnic minority college students in their process of self-renewal. Existing research suggests that intercultural identification must be supported by cultural identity, striving

to expand the boundaries and openness of cultural identity while maintaining cultural subjectivity, enabling different cultures to share more spaces and broader communication platforms [7]. Thus, ethnic minority college students cultivated by higher education institutions should be grounded in a Chinese cultural identity, coupled with an open, tolerant, and egalitarian multicultural attitude, capable of assimilating the strengths of diverse cultures into their cognitive system and cultural value system, embodying talents of the new era. It becomes evident that living experiences in a new cultural environment and subsequent reflections enable ethnic minority college students to gain a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of their original self-concept. The consciousness of the Chinese nation as a community provides emotional support in terms of psychological safety, self-respect, and group affiliation for ethnic minority college students, also contributing to enhancing patriotic sentiments[8]. In optimizing the acculturation model, it is necessary to guide students in reflecting on and summarizing their life experiences and specific events, while simultaneously fostering a solidified consciousness of the Chinese nation as a community.

4. Construction of the Acculturation Model

Ethnic minority college students' cross-cultural adaptation, as illustrated in Figure 1. The background and characteristics of ethnic minority college students, along with the campus environmental atmosphere, are significant factors impacting cross-cultural adaptation. On campus, their attitudes and strategies towards cross-cultural adaptation, as well as the environmental support they receive, play a crucial regulatory role in their cross-cultural adaptation process. After a period of cross-cultural experiences, they will reach a relatively stable outcome in terms of behavior, attitude, and personal growth, encompassing both positive and negative aspects[9]. This cross-cultural adaptation process involves a dynamic interplay of cognition and evaluation of the new campus culture, as well as re-cognition and re-evaluation of their original culture, and it is also a process of self-renewal. The model can be specifically divided into three phases: preparation phase, implementation and evaluation phase, and summary and feedback phase.

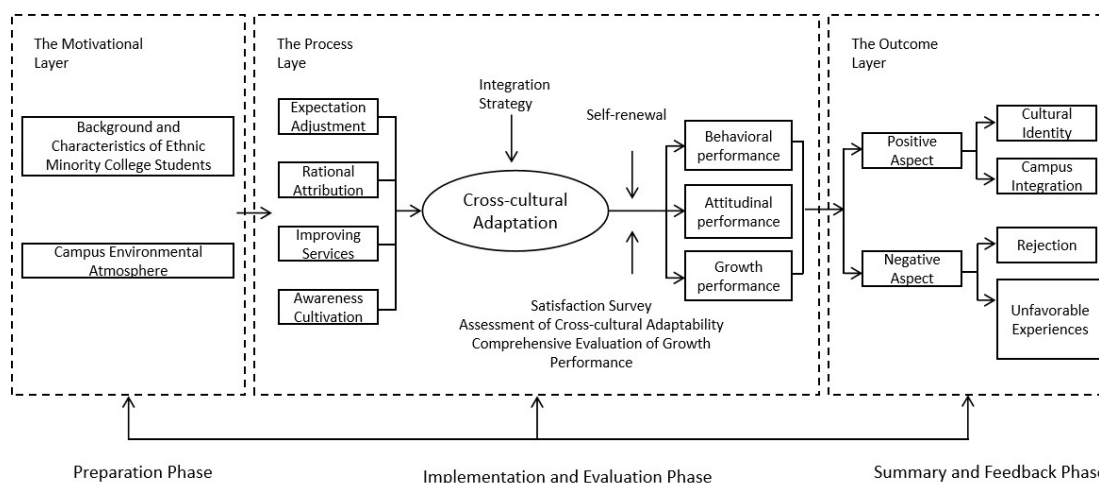


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework of Acculturation Models for Cross-Cultural Adaptation of Ethnic Minority College Students

Preparation Phase: Utilizing information technology, research from previous educational institutions, family backgrounds, and peers with shared learning experiences, gather comprehensive insights into each student's family background, cultural characteristics, learning style, unique needs, interests, abilities, psychological status, customs, and habits. This groundwork is essential for understanding the extent of cultural differences, establishing realistic and positive expectations, guiding appropriate attribution of challenges, and highlighting the paramount importance of supportive campus environmental atmospheres. Efforts should focus on enhancing macro-level recognition, core personnel's ideological understanding, and students' own perspectives. Practical dimensions require intensified efforts, expanding forms of ethnic unity work, creating platforms for ethnic interaction, exchange, and integration, and prioritizing participation of ethnic minority college students in educational activities. It is crucial to move away from merely informing students about events without guiding their participation or monitoring outcomes, laying a solid foundation for enhancing campus services and advancing the grand national project of consolidating the Chinese nation's collective consciousness.

Implementation and Evaluation Phase: This core phase of the model targets guiding students towards adopting an "integration strategy." For students, it entails analyzing successes and failures in cross-cultural adaptation based on specific events or experiences, prompting self-reassessment and adjustment of expectations. At the institutional level, focus should be placed on improving campus infrastructure, educating other ethnic student groups, professionalizing the training of faculty, ethnic minority management teams, and counselors in ideological and political education, and highlighting ethnic elements in educational activities. Consistently applying Marxist "five perspectives" education is key to consolidating students' collective consciousness of the Chinese nation, reinforcing their identification with the great motherland, the Communist Party of China, the Chinese nation, Chinese culture, and socialism with Chinese characteristics, solidifying emotional, historical, ethnic, cultural, and political foundations. Apart from conventional assessment methods employed by the institution, such as surveys, interviews, and data collection, it is crucial for ethnic minority college students to analyze their self-renewal experiences, primarily through documenting, evaluating, and reflecting on specific events or periods. This culminates in

assessing the effectiveness in terms of behavioral, attitudinal, academic, and employment outcomes.

Summary and Feedback Phase: This phase involves summarizing and analyzing the outcomes of ethnic minority college students' cross-cultural adaptation, feeding back both positive and negative effects to students, the campus, and their places of origin. This feedback serves as a reference for students' future personal growth in society and for the institution to collectively enhance the cross-cultural adaptation capabilities of ethnic minority college students. Many ethnic minority college students express a strong willingness to share their experiences with future generations of ethnic peers, aiding their smoother transition into campus life. Therefore, institutions should facilitate interactions and exchanges among students, such as organizing experience-sharing forums for ethnic minority college students, establishing mentoring programs, and creating peer-to-peer support networks.

5. Conclusion

Deepening inter-ethnic student interaction, exchange, and integration is crucial for universities to fulfill their fundamental mission of fostering virtue and nurturing talent. Emphasizing the cross-cultural adaptation of ethnic minority college students within campus environments is a significant measure taken from the perspective of student growth and development. Only by deeply comprehending the acculturation process of cross-cultural adaptation and implementing effective strategies and methods—such as refining student information management, enhancing campus environment atmospheres, stimulating the autonomy of ethnic minority college students, conducting individual-focused assistance and guidance, and providing targeted educational orientation—can we strengthen precise policy measures, augment the cross-cultural adaptation skills of ethnic minority college students, create an atmosphere of ethnic unity, consolidate faculty teams, promote experience sharing and feedback, and thereby facilitate the active adaptation of ethnic minority college students to new cultures within the campus context, encouraging them to choose and practice positive acculturation strategies proactively.

Positive campus-based cross-cultural adaptation experiences of ethnic minority college students will continuously reinforce the effectiveness of consolidating the collective consciousness of the Chinese nation, better guiding all ethnic minority college students to integrate their love for the country, practical actions of serving the country, and aspirations to strengthen the country into the endeavors of socialism with Chinese characteristics. This approach ensures that the cultivation of talents for the Chinese nation's

collective consciousness is not only a theoretical pursuit but also a practical endeavor that contributes to the prosperity and strength of the country.

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