

Research on Innovative Management of International Students in Chinese-Foreign Cooperative Education——Take Shanghai International College of Fashion and Innovation, Donghua University as an Example

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Abstract: Improving the management of international students is of great significance to the long-term sustainable development of education for international students' education in China. Taking Shanghai International College of Fashion and Innovation, Donghua University as an example, this paper analyzes the challenges and innovative approaches in the management of international students in transnational higher education in the new era, explores the management methods of international students, and expands the influence of Chinese-foreign cooperative education in China.

Keywords: Chinese-foreign cooperative education; International students; Management; Innovation

In June 2020, the Opinions of the Ministry of Education and Other Eight Departments on Accelerating and Expanding the Opening up of Education in the New Era pointed out that “we should enhance education opening up to the outside world and build up the brand of ‘studying in China’ for international student.”^[1] The development of education for international students in China is conducive to improving the level of internationalization of domestic schools, which is an important demonstration of China's increasing international influence and the global appeal of Chinese culture. As an important factor affecting the improvement of the level of education abroad, the level of education and management of international students is an indispensable part in the sustainable and healthy development of Chinese-foreign cooperation of higher education.

1. Characteristics of international students in Chinese-foreign cooperative education

1.1 Diversified backgrounds of international students

Shanghai International College of Fashion and Innovation, Donghua University (hereinafter referred to as SCF) was approved by the Ministry of Education of China in February 2014 and enrolled in the same year. By collaborating with the University of Edinburgh, UK (hereinafter referred to as UoE), SCF has set up two undergraduate programmes, i.e. “Fashion Innovation” and “Fashion Interior Design”. Since its establishment, SCF has enrolled more than 60 international students from more than 30 countries. SCF has 22 international students at present, accounting for 8.5% of the total number of students. 68% of international students come from Asia, including Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, and 14% of students come from European countries, including Belgium, Italy, and Columbia. There are also international students from North and South America.

1.2 Distinct personalities of international students in design programmes

Looking from age perspective, the average age of international students at SCF is 2 to 3 years older than that of Chinese students, and the ratio of male to female students is 1:4.5. In terms of language, international students generally have strong English language skills and are more confident to talk in English. However, compared with international students in other programmes, like business, international students majoring in design have poor Chinese language skills, lack motivation of professional interest and their design foundation, like drawing ability, is poor. In addition, international students are more independent than their Chinese peers making decisions by their own, rather than seeking parents' opinions, putting freedom and individuality at their top priority. It takes more

time for international students' administrators to explain to them about the classroom regulations and school policies as well as other emergency notices.

1.3 Big differences in academic performance of international students

SCF conducts convergence management for both Chinese and international students, ensuring that all students have equal access to teaching and learning resources. International students show stronger interaction with professional teachers, especially the courses offered by foreign teachers due to their good English language skills. Thus, some of them have excellent academic performance, ranking the top in their programme. However, some are slack in learning after obtaining a four-year study visa, ignore classroom management regulations, skip classes or ask for leave without sensible reasons, and show little engagement in learning. Compared with Chinese students, they have high tendency to apply for suspension and the dropping-out rate is higher.

2. Challenges in the international student management in the new era

2.1 Different online learning conditions

International students at SCF are from different countries with the maximum time difference of 12 hours. It is challenging for synchronized online teaching and international students' daily management. For overseas international students, it is difficult for them to join synchronized online courses and submit assignment on time. Meanwhile, international students vary in online learning conditions, e.g. poor WIFI connection. Online teaching and management are affected by factors such as delayed information and misunderstanding. Communication is facing greater challenges as the emotional connection and trust between teachers and students is hindered by remote teaching and learning. Overseas students thus have greater psychological pressure and have to try even harder to catch up with their classmates.

2.2 Practical courses faced with great challenges during hybrid teaching period

Compared with the online teaching at other colleges, SCF's project-based curriculum teaching contains many practical sections and extracurricular activities, including onsite research, enterprise visits and various workshops. In addition, project-based courses also require students to engage in practical work, such as model making for Interior programme students, pattern making and cutting for Fashion students. Some international students have no access to materials required for courses, e.g. cloth or model, or have no practical tools before the class starts. Students of Fashion programme lack sewing machine and mannequin while students in Interior lack drawing boards and model cutting machine. The lack of equipment leads to the low engagement in courses, late submission and poor grades.

2.3 Misunderstandings during the management process

The number of international students in China-foreign cooperative education is smaller. Because of different cultural backgrounds and languages, international students have to overcome cross-cultural communication barriers. They tend to gather in small groups, thinking and dealing with problems from a personal point of view. They think that they are different from Chinese students, and should be treated differently^[2]. Sometimes they are not aware of the school regulations and management system. In addition, although there are translated English version of the school policies and regulations, some translation is improper, which makes it difficult for international students to understand.

3. Innovation of education management mode for international students

3.1 Adjust the learning outcome flexibly according to real conditions

The Staff-Student Liaison Committee of SCF (SSLC), set up to provide an effective and coherent system for communication between staff and students at SCF, discusses in detail the hybrid education mode. By improving the teaching equipment and adjusting learning outcomes flexibly based on real situation, SCF responds to students' requests in a timely manner, supports teaching continuously, and manages to improve student's learning experience. For some practical work that requires hands-on experience, SCF teachers encourage students who have no access to materials to purchase some easy-to-buy materials and fully use any resource available at hand. SCF teachers record lively short videos in person and explain in detail about key points. By doing this, students can have a better understanding of the principle knowledge taught in courses as much as possible and make steady progress through hybrid learning.

3.2 Make considerate arrangement to improve students' learning experience

SCF improves the teaching system and promotes the interaction and integration between different professional courses. UK-based SCF teachers exchange thoughts with SCF Shanghai-based teaching team well before each semester begins, keep close contact and make timely adjustment when emergency occurs, taking students' special circumstances into consideration, so as to better serve

the development of hybrid teaching at SCF. SCF builds a diversified online learning community carrying out online air self-study room. SCF teachers upload teaching materials and course requirements well before courses starts, and give clear instructions to guide students learning effectively. Teachers also give written, oral and video feedbacks to each student, improving the communication efficiency and providing effective guidance for students.

3.3 Apply international learning platform to enrich management methods

SCF actively carries out teaching research and innovation, improving the student training mode and teaching methodology. SCF teachers set the teaching time considering time differences and provide online and onsite one-to-one tutoring for students, accommodating their requests and concerns. Meanwhile, SCF employs various instant messaging tools such as Zoom, Teams and Voov meeting, organizing hybrid teaching via group discussion and one-to-one tutoring, fully motivating overseas international students and on-campus students. SCF international teachers also adopts Padlet, a software that provides inspiration for fashion innovation. By setting research topics for professional courses on the Blackboard, students are encouraged to engage in self-research as well as group work, thus creating an interactive channel for students to exchange design thinking and share innovative ideas freely.

3.4 Further improve the student management system

In order to standardize the management system, SCF takes a flexible, scientific-based way of daily management, improve curriculum system and teaching methodology. SCF provides English-taught professional courses for two programmes, collaborating with UoE to offer best learning practice for both Chinese and international students. In the process of daily management, SCF takes international students' different cultural background into consideration, encourages them to adapt to the oversea learning environment quickly by offering them Chinese language and Chinese history courses, organizing various kinds of extra curriculum activities, including telling Chinese stories competition, trips around Shanghai, so as to enhance the exchanges of different cultures, and share the best practice of the fine traditional Chinese culture.

4. Conclusion

In the face of the complex international situation and the recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the flow of international students around the world is accelerating. It is called for the action to strengthen the management of international students, improve the management mechanism, promote the cross-cultural exchange between Chinese and international students, cultivate international talents who are familiar with Chinese culture and committed to the common development of all countries in the world, and provide a solid foundation for the improvement of the teaching quality of Chinese-foreign cooperative education.

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