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EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT FOR IMPROVING THE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION LEVEL OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN YUNNAN PROVINCE

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Abstract

Driven by globalization, the internationalization of schooling calls for high levels of cross cultural literacy from instructors. This study assesses primary school teachers in Yunnan Province, China, to discover how to optimize their intercultural communicative competence through educational management strategies. As a significant gate between China and Southeast Asia, Yunnan's primary school teachers' intercultural communicative competence greatly knows the internationalization of education and regional cooperation. The successful implementation of these strategies will no doubt lead to an increase in teachers' intercultural communicative competence, with the promotion of equitable and balanced development in the educational sector as well as regional collaboration following alongside.

Keywords: educational management, intercultural communication, primary school

Introduction

The increasing importance of intercultural communicative competence has been in the atmosphere of globalization. People with this competence can face the wave of internationalization, grasp the social dynamics of the world in time, and make judgments concerning their environment exhaustively and comprehensively. Intercultural communicative competence plays a pivotal role in the development of individuals, and this is only the tip of the iceberg since it greatly influences international collaboration, the propagation of national soft power, social harmony, and inclusiveness.

Intercultural communicative competence is a transformative notion to the teachers in primary schools. Being the pillars of children worldviews, they influence the first perceptions of children about cultural diversity and mundane unity. In ethnically diverse territories, such as the province of Yunnan where 25 ethnical ethnicities can be found, the primary school teachers are the key figures to promote social inclusion and limit possible cultural clashes (UNESCO, 2021). Their intercultural sensitivity modeling has a direct influence on the formation of inclusive attitudes and collaborative skills of students as future global citizens (Deardorff, 2020).



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More so, intercultural communicative competence is essential to the promotion of educational equity and multicultural development. Educators who possess these abilities will have the capability to tailor teaching to the background of their learners with the marginalized groups (e.g. learners in ethnic minority or border areas) gaining culturally appropriate education. This can be linked to commitments made at the international level through Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) that focus on inclusive and fair quality education due to multicultural approaches (OECD, 2023). With the accelerated pace of collaboration with the ASEAN countries, the intercultural communicative competence of primary teachers is becoming one of the strategic assets that can be used to incorporate local cultural resources into curricula and develop the skills of cross cultural collaboration among students (Zhang et al., 2023).

Finally, it is not only pedagogically necessary but also the development of intercultural communicative competence of primary teachers has spoken to the roots of the principles of a socially cohesive multicultural community on a global basis.

The Role of Education in Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence

Education is considered as the basis of establishing emergent intercultural communicative competence a multi component construct which entails knowledge skills, attitude and critical understanding of proper and proficient communications between cultures (Byram, 1997). Prominent in the current times of growing globalization and interdependence, the place of the intercultural communicative competence in higher education enables them to contribute through the conscious curricular development, novel pedagogy, technology integration, and recycling of institutional policies. The recent literature acknowledges an education process as a process that is more than transferring knowledge about other cultures; it is about dispositions building, allowing learners to learn to critically think and develop in order to be ready to face multicultural complexities (Deardorff, 2022).

Cognitive Experiential Integration

This is one of the most important aspects of systematic curriculum development which helps to open up possibilities to scaffolding processes of the learners in the area of intercultural development between the cognitive and the experience based learning. Knowledge of cultural schemata, history, communication patterns, and social interactions learnt with the help of theoretical knowledge is supplementary to anno experiential experience such as study abroad, cross border classroom learning, and role playing simulations, during which learners practice what they have learnt in a real world or simulated intercultural setting (Jackson, 2023). As an example, organized telecollaborative programs involving virtual exchanges of the classes between Chinese and Southeast Asian universities have shown high results in developing the cross cultural understanding and perspective taking skills of the students (Chen & Li, 2022). In general, such programs are based on such technologies as Zoom or learning management systems to discuss things synchronously or asynchronously, co-construct meaning across linguistic and cultural boundaries.



Experiential integration has worked with teacher education. An evaluation study in Guangxi and Yunnan demonstrated that pre service teachers that underwent community-based immersion fieldwork (e.g., homestays in ethnic minority communities and collaborative teaching) came to embody greater cultural humility and adaptive communication coping strategies than did their peers (Liu et al., 2023). On the same note, primary teachers who had done their training using ASEAN themed case studies that simulated real life classroom diversity exhibited 32 percent better classroom cultural frame based pedagogical dilemma resolving efficacy such as language barriers or parental expectations (Li & Wang, 2023). This is to highlight the fact that inter cultural communicative competence entails practice as well as context sensitive knowledge.

Critical Intercultural Pedagogy

Beyond tokenistic programming such as food, festivals, and fashion (as approaches to multiculturalism), critical intercultural pedagogy frames power dynamic relations, privilege, historical injustices, and deep-seated prejudice as at the heart of intercultural learning (Phyak & Sah, 2022). Employing both Freirean critical pedagogy and the postcolonial theory, teachers are obliged to provide the opportunity to analyze the dominant discourse, dismantle stereotypes, and examine the causes of cultural positioning and the subjectivity of their own biases (Nelson, 2021).

Within the multiethnic classrooms of Yunnan (e.g. with Dai, Hani, Yi, and Bai) students, uncritical teaching practice may serve to recreate Han centric views at the cost of the minority identities. Critical intercultural pedagogies, like counter narratives, community elders as co teachers and critical media analysis have decreased prejudice and bolstered intergroup empathy (Ma & Yang, 2024). The example of such an action research project conducted in 2023 in Dali includes the implementation of the "Migration and Belonging" unit in which students were asked to research their family histories, share experiences of cultural adaption, and the classroom was much more inclusive (Ma & Yang, 2024). The practices are promoters of intercultural competence and educational equity.

Technology Enhanced Collaboration

The digital technologies make intercultural learning possible in the limited resource regions. Intercultural competence can be built via AI driven applications, VR simulations, and gamified training modules, all of which provide scalability in building such a competence. Culturally specific chatbots programmed into AI enables learners to experience the high/low forms of context communication without risk to themselves (Wang & Chen, 2023). VR simulations (e.g., transactions of business/industrial negotiations in Middle East contexts or cross culturally in a conflict situation) enhance perspective taking and emotional regulation (Kim et al., 2022).

The cross-platform hybrid such as the state supported Intercultural Connect enhanced culturally responsive lesson planning of the teachers by 40% in the border regions of Yunnan (Zhang et al., 2024). The program was composed of cultural theory videos, live peer



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interaction, and AI responses to drafts of a lesson. Such applications as a Culture Quest involve students by providing them with cross cultural angst (e.g., interviewing students with other ethnicities or scrutinizing signage with multiple languages), creating community embedded learning (Luo & Huang, 2023). These technologies facilitate human interaction necessitating rather than taking away human interaction.

Policy Institutional Synergy

Sustainable development of intercultural competence must see to it that policies of nations are lined with institutional practices. China's Teacher Development Plan (2023-2025) mandates the training of intercultural competence (minimum 20 hours/certification cycle) as a basic standard (MOE, 2023). The top down approach is supplemented by initiatives at grassroots level such as Yunnan's "Cultural Mentorship Program," pairing urban and rural based teachers with the aim of co-developing teaching materials and conducting mutual class observations (Yunnan ED, 2024). A 2023 evaluation showed that participating teachers gained confidence in handling intercultural issues and reported increased cross district cooperation (Yunnan ED, 2024). Secondary schools institutionalizing intercultural competence with the help of committees, audits, and penetrative hiring reported high levels of student engagement and cross cultural understanding (Sun & Zhao, 2022).

Cross Cultural and Foreign Relations in Yunnan

The Yunnan Province occupies the southwest border of China where it acts as a center of intercultural contact. Its 25 ethnic minorities (e.g., Yi, Bai, Hani, Dai) and Southeast Asian closeness make the sociocultural ones very rich. Yunnan being historically a part of the Southern Silk Road, plays a facilitating role in cross border flows of people, goods, and more importantly ideas which makes it a center of domestic multiculturalization and internationalization in the region (Zhang & Liu, 2022).

Political and Economic Impulses

The position of Yunnan in the Belt and Road Initiative of China encourages investment in infrastructure (e.g., China Laos Railway, Kunming Comprehensive Bonded Zone), which stimulates regional integration (Liu & Chen, 2021). It is connected to the economic interdependence, which increases the necessity of intercultural understanding in the work of professionals, educators, and people employed in the sphere of public administration (Wang & Li, 2023). The intercultural competence is a precondition of regional stability as the ties get stronger in the ASEAN context (Liu & Chen, 2021).

People to People Exchange Advantages

The genuine cultural exchange occurs via cross border kinship, common denomination of languages, and religions. Such platforms as the China South Asia Expo or Lancang Mekong Cooperation framework support cultural diplomacy, as it allows establishing links at the grassroots level among students, artists, or tourists (Yang, 2022). Such a network brings about



greater intercultural understanding both locally and institutionally.

Intercultural Communicative Competence of Yunnan Primary School Teachers Situation Change

Regardless of the cross border focus of Yunnan, primary teachers are not interculturally competent. Research shows the discrepancies between the current skills of teachers and those needed in an internationalized education (Zhang, 2021). Lots of them are successful in teaching national curricula but have difficulties with diverse classrooms or transnational programs because of cultural ignorance and poor communication style (Zhang, 2021). It indicates systemic deficits in the field of teacher education, where intercultural matters are remaining on the margins (Hu & Guo, 2022).

Poor Language skills

Different languages create communication problems. Although Chinese Mandarin can be used as the primary language, it is not proficient in English/Southeast Asian languages (e.g., Thai, Burmese) (Chen, 2021). The low levels of second language training hamper the reactivity of teachers to diversity or collaboration across borders (Liu, 2023). Even the minority bilingual programs prioritize focusing on translation rather than actual dialogue (Liu, 2023), going against the global citizenship education (Chen, 2021).

Lack of Targeted Training

Intercultural competence does not form much part of teacher development. The content of the training conducted in Yunnan pays much attention to curriculum delivery, classroom management, and policy compliance (Yunnan Education Department, 2020). Such competencies as cultural self reflection, empathy, and intercultural dialogue are overlooked (Hu & Guo, 2022). The cross nation schooling suggests intercultural training being connected to equitable schooling (Byram & Wagner, 2020) which is yet to become a part of Chinese frameworks (Zhang, 2021).

Theory Framework and Application

Intercultural Communication Theory

The theory is concerned with the understanding and accommodation of differences in communication by people belonging to different cultures (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). These differences can promote or inhibit communication (Ting Toomey, 1999) and consists of cognitive, communicative, behavioral as well as affective levels.

Application in Education

Intersectionality of Identity (Crenshaw, 1989; Ladson Billings, 2021): In schools of Yunnan, the students record their ethnicities and languages to study privilege and marginality. Intercultural issues are put in the context of role playing simulations (e.g., cross border market negotiations). Partner school artifacts (e.g., Laos/Thailand) are displayed in sister school culture corners. Transformative Learning (Mezirow, 2000): Others (e.g., Mekong Teachers Shadow) allow Yunnan teachers to observe Thai classes. Reflective examples are virtual exchanges (e.g., Zoom science lesson conducted with Vietnamese border schools).



Yunnan Southeast Asia Cooperation Overview

The capabilities of Yunnan to influence the region takes the form of regional cooperation. Railways (such as the China Laos Railway), and trade zones and plans, such as the Lancang Mekong Cooperation, add to economy/culture connectivity (Liu & Chen, 2021). The historical intercultural exchange is facilitated by the common cultural language/religion background. The role of Education Evidence of that bore out in the dissimilarity between the two nations, and evidence of that bore itself out in the difference between the two nations. Education plays the lead role in the cooperation strategy of Yunnan, with the development of human resources to the consolidation of regions. Such efforts include: South/Southeast Asia Education Cooperation Kunming Forum: University alliances (Thailand/Vietnam/Cambodia) in research, vocational education and exchange (Li & Huang, 2022). Policies on bilingual education maintaining diversity of language (Liu, 2023). Education border corridors (e.g., China Laos Vocational Project) to create technical expertise and support policy coordination (Wang, 2020).

The Intercultural Competency Teacher Requirements

The demands of regional cooperation ask more of the teacher besides the command of the language, such cultural awareness, pedagogical flexibility, and facilitation of collaboration (Byram & Wagner, 2020). What is not done yet The focus on the Mandarin language during teacher training is quite high, and the support of the regional language is little (Chen, 2021). There is a little work on intercultural dialogue/conflict resolution (Hu & Guo, 2022). The response is the Yunnan ASEAN Teacher Exchange Program (e.g., with Laos/Cambodia), training a cadre of educators in line with pan regional education (UNESCO, 2023).

Conclusion

A timely improvement of intercultural competence of primary teachers in Yunnan is necessary. Prolonged and systematic strategic management of education will ensure the professionalization of educators, educational internationalization, the enhancement of fairness, ethnic solidarity, and stabilization of sensitive areas. It is essential to optimize the resource and intercultural education system. The adoption of a global inclination will enable the rural teachers to be global and convert the border classrooms into a proverbial learning environment and develop genuine international learning in Yunnan.

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