Family and Cultural Adaptation
——The Role of Family in Fostering Students’ Cross-Cultural Competency

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Abstract: Recent cross-cultural opportunities have started to open up a variety of cultural tensions and visible exclusionary practices, which are of serious concerns. In Taiwan, just within the recent years, the influx of international students and new migrant spouses has risen significantly. In effect, these incidents have gradually transformed the school campus and the Taiwanese society in general, into a more diversified community. With the notion that college students are the country’s future generation, it is therefore quite important to develop their cross-cultural competence early in their college lives. This presentation shall detail an empirical study on the role of school and family in fostering students’ cross-cultural competency. A total of 1032 valid responses were gathered and analyzed. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to analyze and develop a model of relationships among the factors. Results show that students’ exposure to a cross-cultural accepting environment has greatly enhanced their cross-cultural competency. In addition, SEM also shows that the family factor significantly acts as a mediator in the development of a students’ cross-cultural competency.

Keywords: Classroom norm; family norm; cultural values; personal values; cross-cultural competency

1 Introduction

For the past two decades, the rise of globalization and the advancement of technology have dramatically changed the way we conduct business, facilitate communication, educate ourselves, and the way we conduct our daily lives[1, 2]. In addition, the recent large-scale movement of people across the globe has triggered cross-cultural opportunities which were quite seldom in the past, and are now made possible almost every day[3]. These cross-cultural opportunities have actually opened up a variety of cultural tensions and visible exclusionary practices, which are of serious concerns[4].

In the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics (UIS) report of 2009, mentioned that in 2007 around 2.8 million students were enrolled in 153 different host countries’ institutions of learning[5]. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also reported that in 2006 around 2.9 million higher education students were enrolled outside their country of citizenship, this figure actually denotes a 3 percent increase with the 2005 figures[6]. Correspondingly the demand for global cross-border education is forecast to increase from 1.8 million international students in 2000 to 7.2 million in 2025[7]. Analysts predict that around 70 percent of the global demand will be generated within the Asia Pacific region[8].

In Taiwan, just within the recent years, the influx of international students has increased significantly, rising from 6,380 in 2001 to 21,005 in 2007[9]. With the additional efforts to increase the number of international students by the Taiwan’s Ministry of Education (MOE)[10], between the periods of 2001 and 2005, incoming international student enrollments from Central and South America increased to almost 208 percent, while students coming from the European nations increased to around 95 percent[11]. Beside the influx of international students, a gradual growth in numbers of new immigrant spouses have been noted since the early 1990s[12], numbering from 336,483 in 2004 to 426,297 in the month of September 2009, which is an increase of 89,814 in just five years[13]. It is seen that the rise in numbers of international students and new immigrant spouses have gradually transformed the school campus and the Taiwanese society in general, into a more diversified community. In essence, early interventions during the university years should be able to help develop and train future leaders’ cross-cultural skills and intercultural competence.

2 Defining Cross-Cultural Competency

Previous researches in cross-cultural competence are mostly related to international business, workplace diversity, and cross-cultural communications[19]. Within these studies, definitions of cross-cultural competence are mostly framed in the context of workforce diversity in the U.S. Studies related to cross-cultural competency in international business and workplace has grown dramatically with the recent trends in globalization. Business collaborations, joint-ventures, and international assign-
ments have led to the importance of cross-cultural preparations among future workforce\(^{[19]}\). As a result, cross-cultural competencies have become increasingly important in business management. Thus, various different measures have been developed mostly for business purposes\(^{[16]}\).

Cross-cultural competency studies have recently been gaining grounds, with terminologies interchangeably used. However, the measures used and the construct they assess usually depend on the purpose and the type of competency required by a population of interest\(^{[16]}\). Within these studies, Hofstede\(^{[17]}\) suggested that cross-cultural competence can be taught, but he indicated that personality factors also affect the levels of cross-cultural competence that individuals can attain. Therefore, cross-cultural competence can be defined as a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work or function effectively in cross-cultural situations.

With regards to studies in the field of workplace diversity, cross-cultural competence is highly related with terms such as cultural awareness, knowledge, understanding, and sensitivity\(^{[18]}\). Studies also mentioned that cross-cultural competence uses an approach to teaching and learning called experiential learning based on the relevance of certain situations and experiences to the process of learning\(^{[19]}\). While in a study of cultural diversity in healthcare services, Betancourt, Green, Carrillo, and Ananeh-Firempong II\(^{[20]}\) suggested that cross-cultural competence should include cultural sensitivity, responsiveness, effectiveness, and humility. Many cross-cultural competency studies are found in the areas of health care systems, because most agency administrators wish to hire culturally competent providers\(^{[21]}\).

Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven\(^{[22]}\) developed an instrument for the selection of expatriates or as a diagnostic tool for assessing further cross-cultural training needs. Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven's Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) is a personality assessment questionnaire that was constructed specifically to describe behavior when one is interacting with people from different cultures. Factors measured include cultural empathy, open-mindedness, emotional stability, social initiative, and flexibility. The MPQ may be used to predict how easily people are likely to adjust to other cultures and come to feel at home with them. In another study by Matsumoto\(^{[23]}\) and his colleagues, they describe the creation and development of a measure that predicts cross-cultural adjustment potential in Japanese sojourners and immigrants to the US, which they called the ICAPS. They mentioned that the underlying factor structure suggests a model of the psychological components related to cross-cultural adjustment, including emotion regulation, openness, flexibility and creativity or personal autonomy. Their findings are somewhat similar to the factors used in the Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven's MPQ, which also suggest some personal factors and values as important indicators of cross-cultural competence.

Kelley and Meyers\(^{[24]}\) designed an instrument intended to provide information about an individual's cross-cultural effectiveness, which they named Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI). The CCAI was originally created in 1987 and was revised in both 1989 and 1992. Factors measured include emotional resilience, flexibility/openness, perceptual acuity, and personal autonomy\(^{[24]}\). The authors stated that this instrument is applicable to all cultures assuming that anyone who was adapting to a new culture would share the same types of feelings and experiences\(^{[25]}\). However in a newer study, Davis and Finney\(^{[26]}\) suggested that there is a need to revise the different items in the four measured factors due to the misfit of structural models. With the importance of accountability with regards to educational programs, including study abroad programs, administrators needs an evaluation tool with appropriate validity evidence, hence, accurately determine the effectiveness of such educational programs.

In sum, with both the current student population and workforce being so culturally diverse, it is critical that there is an understanding and appreciation of the culturally diverse. Although this conceptualization of cross-cultural competence is rather specific, ultimately, cross-cultural competencies are traits expected to lead individuals to perform in a certain behavior; wherein these behaviors are then in turn expected to lead the desired outcomes that define effectiveness of the purpose it was designed for\(^{[16]}\).

### 3 Methodology

With an objective of creating a model of Taiwanese Students’ Cross-Cultural Competency Development; this empirical study shall attempt to further understand the mediating effects of social factors such as Classroom Cross-Cultural Norm (CCN), Home (family) Cross-Cultural Norm (HCN), Cultural Values (CV), and Personal Values (PV), to the development of the college students’ Cross-Cultural Competence (CCC). This study employs a mixed-method research paradigm, wherein the researcher systematically combined or mixed ideas from both qualitative and quantitative research\(^{[27]}\). Fry, Chantvanich, S., and Chantvanich, A.\(^{[28]}\) mentioned that the benefits obtained from the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods by reviewing three Thai studies. They mentioned that mixed-method studies brings the addition of refined and relevant conceptualization, better understanding of residual unexplained variance, more
valid empirical indicators, more meaningful interpretation of quantitative data, and new theoretical insights to the study.

Procedures for both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analyses were completed in two sequential phases by means of a random and purposive sampling method. Phase one of the study involves the validation of the previous factors found by Chen and Ching[14], namely: Campus Cross-Cultural Climate, Individual Cross-Cultural Perspectives, and Cross-Cultural Flexibility (norms). A total of 5 experts were consulted and suggestions were given on either to remove or revise the items found in the Chen and Ching[14] Cross-Cultural Scale (CCS). The final version of the CCS was then administered to 1,500 strategically selected university students all over Taiwan (during phase two of the study). After two months, a total of 1032 valid questionnaires were collected and analyzed. Data analysis includes confirmatory factor analysis and descriptive statistics for the participants’ demography, while the structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to develop a model of Taiwanese Students’ Cross-Cultural Competency Development, in effect, understand the mediating effects of the various social factors previously mentioned above.

4 Results and Discussions

4.1 Evaluation of the SEM model

Model specification, estimation of free parameters, assessment of fit, and model modification are the four steps involved in the SEM analysis. Cronbach’s[29] alphas values and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were first completed before the SEM analysis. The alpha value is 0.855, which is considered highly reliable[30]. To evaluate the goodness-of-fit of the measurement model, the software Lisrel was used to obtain a chi-square ($\chi^2$) statistic. However, Chi square is highly sensitive to departures from multivariate normality. In essence, Chi-square is sensitive to sample size. With large sample size, the Chi-square values will be inflated (statistically significant), thus might erroneously implying a poor data-to-model fit[31]. Hence, in the case of the current study with a large sample size of 1032, the Chi-square was computed as $\chi^2=537.53$, $df=144$, $p=0.000$.

In order to further evaluate the goodness-of-fit of the measurement model with less dependent on sample size, Relative Chi-square, also called normal Chi-square; is the Chi-square fit index divided by $df$, will be compute[32]. With the current study, it is suggested that a ratio from 1 to 5 as a reasonable fit[33]. Hence, the Relative Chi-square was computed as $\chi^2/df=3.73$; a reasonable fit.

4.2 The Taiwanese Students’ Cross-Cultural Competency Development Model

For the Taiwanese students’ cross-cultural competency development model, SEM results show that the students’ CCC is completely mediated the students’ PV. Looking at figure 1, data suggest that without the mediation of PV, CV is not sufficient to instill an effect on CCC. On the contrary, CV exhibits a negative effect on CCC. In other words, when considering the students’ CCN both CV and PV are crucial factors. Furthermore, CCN (School) and HCN (Family) in turn exhibits positive effects on CV and PV respectively (please refer to figure 1).

![Table 1. Standardized casual effect for the model](image_url)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Determinants</th>
<th>Direct effect</th>
<th>Indirect effect</th>
<th>Total effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Cross-Cultural Competence</td>
<td>Personal Values</td>
<td>0.57**</td>
<td>0.57**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(R$^2=0.32$)</td>
<td>Cultural Values</td>
<td>-0.22**</td>
<td>0.32**</td>
<td>0.09*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home Cross-Cultural Norm</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom Cross-Cultural Norm</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Values</td>
<td>Cultural Values</td>
<td>0.56**</td>
<td>0.56**</td>
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<tr>
<td>(R$^2=0.31$)</td>
<td>Home Cross-Cultural Norm</td>
<td>0.32**</td>
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<tr>
<td>(R$^2=0.15$)</td>
<td>Classroom Cross-Cultural Norm</td>
<td>0.30**</td>
<td>0.30**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: SEM results: CFI=0.97, TLI=0.95, RMSEA=0.03 (p<0.05)
Table 1 also shows the percentage of explanation of the different latent factors (items in bold). Simply put CCC can be explained (or influences) by around 57% (0.57) of the students’ PV, so forth and so on.

5 Conclusions

The primary aim of this study is to develop a model of Taiwanese Students’ Cross-Cultural Competency Development and to determine the role of family in the proposed model. Findings suggest that although CCN is mediated by the students’ personal values, PV is very much affected by their home cross-cultural norm (HCN). Such norms include the encouragement of family members, and respects and understanding towards foreigners. In essence, higher education institutions should exert efforts in opening up opportunities for parents to participate in-in-school cross-cultural activities, hence, help parents better understand the importance of cross-cultural development in students.

References