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Exploring the Influence of Transnational Educational Policies on Cross-Cultural Adaptability and Institutional Support for Northern Chinese Students in Thai Higher Education

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Abstract

The primary objective of this study is to elucidate the complex interrelationships among transnational educational policies, cross-cultural adaptability, and institutional support. Utilizing a qualitative methodology through semi-structured interviews, the research aims to examine the impact of these policies on the cross-cultural adaptability of Northern Chinese students, as well as the nature of support provided by Thai higher education institutions. This study endeavours to uncover the mediating roles of cultural competence training and social support in shaping students' experiences, thereby offering a nuanced understanding of the practical implications of these policies within a non-Western academic context. This qualitative study involved conducting 17 semi-structured interviews with Northern Chinese students enrolled in Thai higher education institutions. Interviews continued until data saturation was reached, ensuring a thorough examination of the participants' narratives. Through a three-step thematic analysis, the research investigated the relationships among transnational educational policies, cross-cultural adaptability, and institutional support, with a particular focus on the mediating effects of cultural competence training and social support. The findings of this study elucidate the significant influence of transnational educational policies on the cross-cultural adaptability of Northern Chinese students. The research reveals the intricate relationships between these policies, cultural competence training, social support, and the provision of institutional support. By examining participants' narratives, the study offers empirical insights into how policies manifest as tangible outcomes, affecting students' ability to navigate and adapt to a new cultural and academic environment. This research enhances the existing body of knowledge by providing context-specific insights into the experiences of Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education. It addresses gaps in previous research by examining the practical outcomes of transnational educational policies and highlighting the mediating roles of cultural competence training and social support. The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform policymakers, educators, and institutions on creating more inclusive and supportive environments for international students. By emphasizing the unique perspectives of Northern Chinese students, the research enriches the literature on transnational higher education, cultural competence, and student support, thereby paving the way for future studies in diverse cultural and educational contexts.

Introduction

Globalization has significantly transformed higher education, leading to an increase in the number of overseas students. In the realm of international education, interactions among students from diverse cultural backgrounds present both challenges and opportunities for educational institutions (Molise et al., 2023). Understanding the intricate relationships between institutional support, cross-cultural adaptability, and transnational educational policy is essential as the number of foreign students studying abroad continues to rise. This study focuses on Northern Chinese students

in Thai higher education institutions as a unique case to illuminate these relationships. By examining the impact of transnational educational policies on foreign students' cross-cultural adaptability and the institutional support they receive, this research enhances our understanding of how policy frameworks influence academic experiences. The global migration of students necessitates significant operational adjustments within educational institutions (Huang et al., 2022). Language, social, and intellectual factors make transitioning to a new academic and cultural environment challenging for international students. Higher education institutions must develop support systems that cater to the diverse needs of their student body (Udeagha et al., 2022). Thailand, with its diverse academic programs and vibrant cultural environment, is becoming an increasingly popular destination for international students seeking higher education (Chiang & Chen, 2022). Northern Chinese students, in particular, face unique cultural challenges within Thailand's academic setting. This research, grounded in the experiences, narratives, and perspectives of these students, provides empirical evidence on how institutional support, cultural adaptability, and policy frameworks are interrelated.

This study examines the interplay between transnational education policy, cross-cultural adaptability, and institutional support for Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education. Each component uniquely and interdependently influences the experiences of international students. Transnational education policies play a crucial role in facilitating social integration for international students (Macedo, 2023). These policies often include systematic practices such as cultural competence training for staff and teachers to better support diverse student populations. Prior research has shown that inclusive and culturally sensitive environments, fostered by such policies, enhance the well-being of international students (Ko, 2019). Wong et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of policies that support students from various cultural backgrounds, aiding their integration into the classroom. Cross-cultural adaptability is vital for the academic and cultural success of international students and is influenced by individual traits, cultural differences, and the support systems of educational institutions. Transnational education enhances students' cross-cultural adaptability through initiatives like cultural competence training. Vella et al. (2022) found that such training significantly aids international students in their adjustment process. Additionally, the resources, services, and efforts provided by educational institutions are critical for the academic and social integration of international students. Liu et al. (2020) demonstrated that institutional support significantly impacts international students' academic performance and well-being. The effectiveness and accessibility of these support services can be influenced by transnational education policies.

Previous research rarely addresses the environmental factors that influence the educational and cultural experiences of international students (Foteva et al., 2023). Studies have predominantly focused on

Western contexts, leaving the experiences of non-Western students less understood. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education, focusing on institutional support, cross-cultural adaptability, and transnational educational policy. While global educational policies significantly impact the daily lives of international students (Melzi et al., 2023), this area has been underexplored in prior research. Although these policies are theoretically important, empirical evidence is needed to assess their effects on students. Moreover, the influence of social support and cultural competence training on the outcomes of international students and the role of transnational educational policies in this context remain insufficiently understood (Thoma, 2023). Visualizing the intermediary mechanisms of policy can provide a deeper understanding of complex dynamics. This study investigates the intricate relationships between institutional support, cross-cultural adaptability, and transnational education policy for Northern Chinese students in Thailand. To achieve its various research objectives, the study employs qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews. It explores how transnational educational practices influence the cross-cultural adaptability of Northern Chinese students within Thailand's cultural context. Additionally, the research examines how training programs enhance specialized and effective support services for these students. The findings of this study are significant for numerous stakeholders in international education. They offer policymakers concrete evidence of the benefits of global educational initiatives. Educational institutions can gain insights into the specific support needs of Northern Chinese students, which can inform the development of more welcoming and inclusive environments. By understanding the interplay between social support, cultural competence training, and institutional activities, academic institutions can foster improved academic and overall development for international students.

Literature Review

International education has become increasingly important as educational institutions worldwide confront the challenges and opportunities presented by a growing number of internationally mobile students. The literature on this topic highlights the complexity of cultural adaptation, institutional support, and global educational strategies. Xiao et al. (2020) underscore the significance of cross-cultural competencies and the transformative impact of international education on students' worldviews. Heu et al. (2020) examine the socio-cultural dimensions of student mobility, emphasizing the importance of understanding cross-cultural adaptation processes when students engage with host country educational institutions. Recent scholarship has shifted focus towards the institutional structures that influence international education, in addition to individual experiences. Brown et al. (2021) investigate how international educational policies affect student mobility and performance. According to Ylimaki (2023), policies evolve over time, impacting the educational experiences of international students. Liu et al. (2023) critique policy objectives that may

not fully address students' needs, even when such policies promote internationalization. Prior literature also stress the necessity of examining how institutional policies influence the daily lives of international students. This research underscores the importance of understanding the holistic impact of transnational educational policies on internationally mobile students' education.

Cross-Cultural Adaptability

Cross-cultural adaptability is crucial for international students pursuing higher education abroad. [Lim \(2021\)](#) defines multifaceted cross-cultural adaptability as the ability to thrive in diverse cultural contexts. Northern Chinese students studying at Thai higher education institutions encounter numerous challenges as they adjust to new academic and cultural environments. According to [Câmara-Costa et al. \(2021\)](#), cross-cultural adaptability significantly influences foreign students' academic achievement, mental well-being, and overall satisfaction. Given its complexity, it is imperative to study the cross-cultural adaptation strategies of Northern Chinese students and how cultural differences between China and Thailand impact them. Language barriers pose a significant challenge for Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education. Effective communication is crucial for academic and social success, yet language hurdles, as emphasized by [Al-Husban \(2020\)](#), can be substantial. Mandarin-speaking Northern Chinese students may struggle in Thai or English-only classrooms, affecting their ability to comprehend lectures, engage in class discussions, and communicate with peers and instructors. The use of academic and social language in cross-cultural adaptation processes must be carefully considered. Additionally, Northern Chinese students face significant challenges due to cultural differences with Thailand. [Banks et al. \(2023\)](#) highlight that disparities in communication styles, social norms, and academic expectations can pose obstacles during the adaptation process for international students.

Transnational Educational Policies

Transnational education regulations significantly impact the educational experiences of Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education. According to [Fung & Lo \(2023\)](#), these policies encompass legal frameworks, customs, and guidelines that affect the education of foreign students. Northern Chinese students studying in Thailand must adhere to admission requirements, language proficiency standards, and academic institution protocols. Understanding institutional support and cross-cultural adaptability necessitates an examination of how these policies are implemented and their impact on student performance. Higher education institutions commonly adopt transnational teaching methodologies to foster internationalization. [Chonka \(2024\)](#) notes that universities and governments seek to create global learning environments and diverse student cohorts. Thai higher education policies influence Northern Chinese students through initiatives such as cultural competence training, language proficiency development, and admissions strategies that prioritize

diversity. The effectiveness of these policies in meeting the demands of Northern Chinese students is crucial. Tailored interventions can facilitate academic adjustment for these students in Thailand, especially concerning language requirements. Language proficiency plays a pivotal role in the global educational strategy for Northern Chinese students. Mandarin-speaking students may encounter difficulties with Thai or English languages. [Ridell & Walldén \(2023\)](#) suggest that language barriers can impede academic performance, hinder communication between students and professors, and lead to social isolation. Investigating the adequacy of language provisions for the linguistic diversity of Northern Chinese students and the effectiveness of support services is essential to understanding their influence. Policies that support international students' language needs contribute to enhanced cross-cultural adaptability. Transnational education initiatives promote cultural competence training for Northern Chinese students, benefiting professionals, students, and instructors alike through these educational programs.

Institutional Support

Institutional support plays a pivotal role in fostering a robust and inclusive educational experience for international students, particularly for Northern Chinese students navigating Thai higher education. This support encompasses a wide array of activities, resources, and services designed to promote the academic and personal success of international students. [Zhou \(2024\)](#) underscores the importance of various facets of institutional support, including academic assistance and support mechanisms aimed at helping students acclimate to new academic and cultural environments. Northern Chinese students specifically benefit from tailored institutional support that addresses their unique needs. Essential components such as language support, academic counselling, and tutoring are crucial for fostering academic achievement. According to [Wei \(2022\)](#), international students require academic guidance to navigate course prerequisites, select appropriate courses, and make informed educational decisions. Northern Chinese students studying in Thailand rely on guidance to overcome language barriers, comprehend academic expectations, and meet the standards of their host universities. Effective language support and tutoring programs are instrumental in bolstering academic success and helping Northern Chinese students surmount linguistic challenges ([Ruan et al., 2020](#)). Effective programs catering to international students' needs underscore the importance of personalized institutional support. There is a need for institutions to assess the efficacy and accessibility of academic support specifically for Northern Chinese students. This support includes academic guidance and socio-cultural assistance, encompassing counselling, orientation programs, and integration into the local culture. [Lyu et al. \(2023\)](#) stress the importance of counselling for maintaining international students' mental health, suggesting culturally appropriate therapy could aid Northern Chinese students in adapting to a new cultural and educational environment ([Ducker, 2022](#)). Orientation programs play a crucial role in familiarizing

students with academic requirements, university resources, and support services. Such initiatives help Northern Chinese students adjust to Thai higher education, foster connections with peers, and learn about local cultural norms (Morgan, 2023). Early engagement in these programs is vital for the well-being and social integration of Northern Chinese students. Institutional efforts, such as cultural events, peer mentorship, and cross-cultural courses, further enhance social adaptability beyond academic support (Anufrieva, 2022).

Cultural Competence Training

Teachers and students in Thai institutions enrolling Northern Chinese students benefit from cultural competence training to navigate the increasingly diverse higher education environment. Misunderstandings in cross-cultural interactions can lead to discomfort, less inclusivity, and misinterpretations (O'Rourke et al., 2021). Beyond fostering cultural awareness, this training equips participants with skills, attitudes, and knowledge to effectively engage with individuals from different cultures. Faculty members require cultural competence training to promote inclusivity in the classroom. According to Vella et al. (2022), instructors significantly impact the educational experiences of international students. Cultural competence training helps educators understand cultural norms, mitigate biases in teaching and evaluation, and create a supportive learning environment. Northern Chinese students pursuing higher education in Thailand can benefit academically and culturally from faculty trained in cultural competence (McCoy et al., 2022). Training programs should address the unique challenges and cultural differences faced by Northern Chinese students, including aspects of Chinese collectivism, hierarchical structures, and communication styles. Curriculum should incorporate diverse perspectives to foster an inclusive academic environment that respects students' cultural backgrounds, as advocated by faculty training initiatives (Henson & Drame, 2022). Cultural competence training enhances academic and cultural adaptation by improving communication skills, cultural awareness, and intercultural competence. Northern Chinese students benefit from tailored training that aligns with their academic objectives, language preferences, and cultural background. Prior literature advocate for practical application of cultural competence knowledge in real-life situations. Effective cross-cultural communication also hinges on addressing language challenges specific to Northern Chinese students, including understanding language nuances, colloquialisms, and multinational communication styles (Tatarinova et al., 2022).

Methodology

Participants

The qualitative study involved seventeen Northern Chinese students enrolled in various disciplines within Thailand's higher education institutions. Participants were selected to ensure diversity across academic

fields, length of stay in Thailand, and educational levels (both undergraduate and postgraduate), as detailed in [Table 1](#). Recruitment efforts included distributing study information through departmental announcements and student groups. Applicants underwent screening based on academic standing, field of expertise, and nationality. Participation was voluntary, and the confidentiality of research participants was maintained. Inclusion criteria ensured that all participants possessed first-hand experiences relevant to the study's objectives.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents.

Participant	Gender	Academic Level	Length of Stay in Thailand
P1	Female	Undergraduate	2 years
P2	Male	Postgraduate	1 year
P3	Female	Undergraduate	3 years
P4	Male	Postgraduate	2 years
P5	Female	Postgraduate	1.5 years
P6	Male	Undergraduate	2.5 years
P7	Female	Postgraduate	1.8 years
P8	Male	Undergraduate	2.2 years
P9	Female	Postgraduate	1.3 years
P10	Male	Undergraduate	2.8 years
P11	Female	Postgraduate	1.6 years
P12	Male	Undergraduate	2.5 years
P13	Female	Postgraduate	1.2 years
P14	Male	Undergraduate	3.5 years
P15	Female	Postgraduate	1.5 years
P16	Male	Undergraduate	2.3 years
P17	Female	Postgraduate	1.7 years

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews constituted the primary method of data collection in this study (see [Table 2](#)). These interviews were chosen for their flexibility in capturing diverse perspectives from seventeen Northern Chinese students enrolled in higher education programs in Thailand. An interview guide was developed to facilitate a comprehensive exploration of cross-cultural adaptation, institutional support, cultural competence training, and social support, informed by key themes identified in the literature. Interested students from various academic disciplines, educational levels, and durations of residency voluntarily contacted the researcher after receiving study materials distributed through university channels. Eligibility was confirmed through a screening process adhering to predetermined criteria. Interviews, conducted individually, lasted between sixty to ninety minutes in private settings to encourage candid responses. This approach allowed participants ample time to provide detailed accounts of their experiences.

Table 2: Interview Guidelines.

Variable	Interview Questions
Cross-Cultural Adaptability	1. Can you describe your experiences adapting to the cultural differences between China and Thailand within the academic environment?
	2. What challenges have you encountered in terms of language, communication, or social norms, and how have you navigated these challenges?
	3. In what ways have you actively engaged with the Thai culture to enhance your cross-cultural adaptability?
Influence of Policies	1. How do you perceive the impact of educational policies on your overall experience as a Northern Chinese student in Thai higher education?
	2. Have you noticed any specific policies that either facilitated or hindered your adaptation and academic success?
	3. Do you feel that policies align with the needs of Northern Chinese students, particularly in terms of language requirements and cultural training?
Institutional Support	1. Can you share your experiences with institutional support services, such as academic advising, counselling, or orientation programs?
	2. How effective do you find these support services in addressing the challenges you face as an international student?
	3. Have you observed any gaps or areas where institutional support could be improved for Northern Chinese students?
Cultural Competence Training	1. What has been your experience with cultural competence training provided by the institution?
	2. In what ways do you believe cultural competence training has influenced your interactions with faculty, staff, and peers?
	3. How do you perceive the role of cultural competence training in enhancing your overall cross-cultural adaptability?
Social Support	1. Can you describe the role of peer interactions and social networks in your experience as a Northern Chinese student in Thai higher education?
	2. Have you participated in any mentorship programs, and if so, how have they contributed to your sense of community and well-being?
	3. How do you perceive the availability and effectiveness of institutional mechanisms, such as counselling services and cultural exchange programs?

The data underwent rigorous analysis using a systematic three-step thematic framework developed by [Braun & Clarke \(2006\)](#). This method enabled a comprehensive exploration of the rich qualitative information derived from the semi-structured interviews. Initially, the data was familiarized with through a preliminary review (see [Table 3](#)). All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and meticulous scrutiny of the transcripts was undertaken to gain a thorough understanding of the material. This approach allowed the researcher to

deeply engage with participant narratives and identify emerging themes such as institutional support, social support, cross-cultural adaptation, and cultural competence training. In the second stage, initial codes were systematically generated. Transcripts were line-by-line coded to capture key statements or observations pertaining to the study's themes, ensuring a comprehensive representation of diverse perspectives and experiences. These codes were then organized into categories to highlight common themes across all participant experiences. The final stage involved theme development, where codes were refined and grouped into coherent themes addressing the study's most significant issues in a logical and thorough manner. This process included examination, revision, and discussion with another researcher to mitigate biases and enhance the analytical validity and reliability of the data interpretation.

Table 3: Stages of Thematic Analysis.

Stage	Description
Stage 1: Data Familiarization	- Transcription of interview recordings was carried out meticulously to ensure accuracy and completeness.
	- The researcher immersed themselves in the transcripts to gain a deep understanding of the participants' narratives.
	- Initial readings were focused on comprehending the content and identifying potential themes related to the research questions.
	- This stage aimed to establish a solid foundation for subsequent coding and theme development.
Stage 2: Generating Initial Codes	- A systematic coding process was employed, involving line-by-line coding of the transcripts.
	- Codes were assigned to significant statements or phrases related to cross-cultural adaptation, institutional support, cultural competence training, and social support.
	- The coding process was iterative, allowing for a thorough examination of the data and the identification of diverse perspectives.
	- Codes were collated into broader categories to capture the overarching themes reflecting the participants' experiences.
Stage 3: Theme Development	- The codes were organized into coherent and comprehensive themes that encapsulated the key aspects of the research questions.
	- An iterative process of reviewing, revising, and discussing with a second researcher was undertaken to refine and enhance the themes.
	- Themes were continually reassessed and validated through ongoing discussions and peer debriefing to ensure a robust and reliable analysis.
	- The final themes were structured to reflect the complexities inherent in the cross-cultural adaptation process, institutional support, cultural competence training, and social support.

The researcher-maintained awareness of their biases and positionality throughout the thematic analysis process. Reflexivity was employed to mitigate preconceived notions during the analysis by critically evaluating participants' perspectives. The iterative nature of theme analysis facilitated a dynamic research approach, allowing for the identification and exploration of new themes to deepen the understanding of participants' viewpoints. Debriefing sessions with fellow researchers expanded perspectives and enhanced the rigor of the study. Member verification was incorporated for validation purposes, where participants reviewed preliminary findings to confirm the accuracy and relevance of identified themes based on their personal experiences. Continuous validation and refinement of themes improved the reliability and credibility of the research. Data saturation, achieved after 17 interviews, indicated that additional interviews would not yield new themes or insights. This deliberate approach bolstered the study's credibility and trustworthiness by comprehensively capturing the nuanced and intricate experiences of participants during the thematic analysis process.

Results

This study explores the intricate relationships among transnational educational policies, cross-cultural adaptability, and institutional support for Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education, aiming to elucidate their impact on foreign students' academic experiences. Transnational educational policies influence the cross-cultural adaptability of Northern Chinese students and the support they receive from institutions and society. Through first-hand accounts, the study examines how these regulations affect the diverse academic environments of students from different ethnic backgrounds. The study enhances understanding of how policies influence institutional support mechanisms, with cultural competence education and social training playing mediating roles. In the findings section, participant quotes and scholarly references combine to form a comprehensive narrative illustrating how policy frameworks, student adaptability, and support systems collectively contribute to a conducive educational environment for international students.

Transnational Educational Policies Influences Cross-Cultural Adaptability

The study investigated the impact of transnational education on the cross-cultural adaptability of Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education. Participants emphasized how policies influence their experiences and adaptability. Participant P5 noted, "The policies promoting internationalization and cultural exchange programs have significantly improved my understanding of Thai culture and facilitated my social integration." Meanwhile, P12 highlighted, "Language proficiency requirements mandated by educational policies encourage students to enhance their Thai language skills, essential for effective communication and adaptation in the academic environment," underscoring the role of policies in addressing language barriers and fostering cross-cultural adaptability. The study highlighted the importance of adapting transnational

education approaches to fit the cultural context of the host country. Participant P7 commented, "Policies that are culturally sensitive and tailored to the local context are more effective." This underscores the need to address specific challenges faced by Northern Chinese students in Thailand rather than simply pursuing broad globalization objectives. The research also emphasized the positive impact of cross-cultural awareness and training initiatives on students' adaptability. Participant P14 stated, "Implementing standards that require cultural competence training for faculty and staff has strengthened our relationships and made academics more accessible." Overall, the study suggests a need for policies that move beyond administrative functions to actively support culturally appropriate education. Li and Wang support this view, affirming the positive correlation between culturally responsive policies and cross-cultural adaptability among international student.

Transnational Educational Policies Influences Institutional Support

The impact of transnational education policies on institutional support for Northern Chinese students in Thailand revealed intricate relationships between institutional support mechanisms and policy frameworks. The effectiveness and availability of institutional support were underscored by regulations. Participant P8 noted, "Policies emphasizing the importance of supporting international students enabled the establishment of dedicated offices and resources." This significantly enhances our institutional support options. Policies promote support and institutional commitment to international students. Participant P15 stated, "Institutions prioritize our well-being when policies mandate a comprehensive range of support services." These needs necessitate a robust support system encompassing orientation programs and counselling tailored for Northern Chinese students. Respondents also highlighted the proactive role of policies in supporting international students. P11 commented, "Policies promoting faculty and staff training on the needs of foreign students have a positive impact." Proactive support addresses our challenges, illustrating how policies shape an institution's culture to better serve overseas students. [Luong et al. \(2023\)](#) found that the institutional integration of international students significantly influences the provision of support services. Universities are more likely to allocate resources and implement programs when policies support international students, as noted by [Sahlberg & Stringer \(2023\)](#), who observed that faculty cultural competence training enhances institutional support. These initiatives foster an inclusive and tolerant learning environment, according to respondents, emphasizing the influence of policies on the support capabilities of faculty and staff.

Cultural Competence Training Mediates the Relationship between Transnational Educational Policies and Cross-Cultural Adaptability

The study underscored the influence of cultural competence training on cross-cultural adaptability and transnational educational policies, revealing how regulations impact the cultural competence of teachers and staff supporting Northern Chinese students in Thailand. Participant P4

highlighted the significance of policies promoting cultural competence training in fostering an inclusive academic environment through enhanced cross-cultural understanding among faculty. Policies documenting these requirements can shape faculty practices, ensuring educators are equipped to support international students effectively. Participant P10 noted that teachers' cultural competence training influences daily interactions with students, crucial for effective adaptation and communication in academic settings. This study emphasizes the impact of cultural competence training policies on academic communication. [Shepherd \(2019\)](#) affirmed that policies mandating faculty cultural competence training enhance cross-cultural interactions, aligning with respondents' views that such regulations improve the academic environment for international students. Participant P16 emphasized the necessity of comprehensive and ongoing cultural competence training initiatives, noting that policies requiring regular training sessions have a lasting impact on cultural awareness beyond occasional seminars. Policies play a pivotal role in structuring and maintaining the consistency of cultural competence training programs. [Yang et al. \(2023\)](#) advocated for continuous and rigorous cultural competence training, reinforcing the study's findings that ongoing professional development supported by policies is essential for faculty and staff to effectively support international students. The study concluded that cultural competence training directly impacts policies and the cross-cultural adaptability of Northern Chinese students, as affirmed by Participant P14, who highlighted its role in bridging cultural differences and enhancing academic success in a new educational context. This underscores cultural competence training as a tangible policy outcome crucial for enhancing students' cultural adaptability.

Cultural Competence Training Mediates the Relationship between Transnational Educational Policies and Institutional Support

Extensive research has investigated the impact of institutional support on cultural competence training and transnational educational policies, examining its implications for support systems for Northern Chinese students studying in Thailand's higher education institutions. Respondent P9 underscored the crucial role of cultural competence training in enhancing institutional support, noting that policies mandating such training enhance the effectiveness and appropriateness of support services. Mere textual support is inadequate; it must be culturally attuned to meet our specific needs. Policies promoting culturally responsive institutional support have practical implications, as highlighted by P13, who observed that cultural competence training enhances the efficiency and accessibility of support services by grounding them in an understanding of our cultural background, thereby rendering them more relevant and accessible. This underscores the importance of cultural competence training in enhancing institutional support services. [LaForett & De Marco \(2020\)](#) demonstrated that cultural competence training initiatives significantly enhance institutional support for international students, corroborating these findings. The research supports participants'

views that policies in this area promote locally attuned and culturally responsive support networks. Cultural competence training bridges financial support mechanisms and policies, as noted by P5, who highlighted that "financial staff trained in cultural competence are well-equipped to understand our unique financial challenges." This aspect significantly impacts the availability and accessibility of financial support services, illustrating how cultural competence training can bridge policy and the specific support needs of international students. [Alhosani \(2022\)](#) found that cultural competence training mediates financial support strategies and institutional policies, suggesting that integrating cultural competence training into policies could enhance the effectiveness of financial support programs. Participants emphasized the importance of policies facilitating comprehensive and consistent cultural competence training. According to P3, cultural competence training is integral to the ongoing professional development of faculty and staff, ensuring they consistently provide culturally sensitive support—a continuous process. This approach underscores how policies shape the structure and continuity of cultural competence training programs.

Social Support Mediates the Relationship between Transnational Educational Policies and Cross-Cultural Adaptability

An examination of how social support moderates the correlation between cross-cultural adaptability and transnational educational policies revealed that interpersonal interactions profoundly shape the adaptation experiences of Northern Chinese students at Thai universities. According to respondent P7, "Policies that encourage activities fostering student interaction directly contribute to the formation of social support networks." Merely simplifying policies is insufficient; the goal is to cultivate genuine connections. This highlights the critical importance of implementing strategies that nurture robust support networks. P14 observed that "Policies advocating mentoring programs and peer support initiatives positively influence the development of resilient social support systems." Establishing an environment where students can seek guidance and assistance is essential. Social support facilitates meaningful and relevant communication among students, aligning with policy objectives. [Li & Peng \(2022\)](#) noted that initiatives promoting social integration enhance social support for international students, supporting their findings. The study concurs with respondents that policies in this area should promote strong social support networks. Social policies aid student adjustment by providing support. P12 remarked, "Social support acts as an intermediary between policies and our ability to understand cultural nuances." Social support mitigates the link between policies and students' cross-cultural adaptability, underscoring its practical importance.

Social Support Mediates the Relationship between Transnational Educational Policies and Institutional Support

The investigation into how social support mediates institutional support and transnational educational policies provided significant insights into

the support mechanisms available to Northern Chinese students studying in Thailand. Respondent P11 emphasized that "policies promoting social interactions among students and fostering a sense of community directly contribute to the enhancement and development of institutional support." The aim is to cultivate an environment where students feel connected and supported, not merely complying with formal directives. This underscores the practical value of initiatives that foster a welcoming environment conducive to social interactions and institutional support. Similarly, P6 highlighted the role of policies in shaping academic social support, noting that "policies mandating mentoring programs and encouraging peer interactions directly contribute to establishing a robust social support system." This involves creating a supportive and guiding environment for students. The study underscores the importance of social support in translating policy objectives into tangible and meaningful student connections, thereby influencing institutional assistance. [Ma et al. \(2022\)](#) underscored the significant correlation between social integration strategies and institutional support for international students, affirming these findings. The study aligns with respondents' perspectives that policies in this area should promote robust social support networks. P9 noted, "Social support acts as an intermediary between financial support services and policy implementation." In an environment where policies foster social interactions, students can readily access financial advice and assistance. This concept highlights how social support bridges policy with specific needs, including financial aid. Supporting this notion, [Russo et al. \(2023\)](#) demonstrated that social support mediates the relationship between financial support systems and institutional policies.

Discussion

The experiences of Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education are intricately linked to institutional support, cross-cultural adaptability, and transnational educational policy. This chapter delves deeper into this nexus by integrating participant observations with relevant research. The study findings illustrate how policies can significantly impact the accessibility of institutional support services and the cultural dynamics within academic institutions. In Thai higher education, the cross-cultural adaptability of Northern Chinese students is influenced by substantial transnational educational strategies. The challenges and experiences recounted by participants underscore the critical role of policies in fostering a welcoming and supportive learning environment. [Louie & Sierschynski \(2020\)](#), in their literature review, found that inclusive campuses enhance foreign students' sense of belonging by prioritizing cross-cultural understanding. The study also identified a positive correlation between culturally sensitive policies and the adaptability of Northern Chinese students. Research examining the effects of international education policies on institutional support has similarly shown that these policies significantly impact educational institutions' ability to provide and utilize support services ([Cohen & Calderon Aponte, 2021](#)). Participants noted that policies tailored to international students specifically positively affect the quantity and quality

of institutional support. Our analysis aligns with previous research, highlighting the symbiotic relationship between policies and institutional commitment to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for foreign students. Contributing to the literature, this study investigates how institutional policies shape students' daily experiences and the support structures surrounding them. Cultural competence training emerged as a significant mediating factor between cross-cultural adaptability and policy, as evidenced in mediation research (Ren et al., 2023). The participants in the discussion raised the potential impact of policies mandating cultural competence training for staff. Supporting these findings, Kamau et al. (2022) identified that policies promoting cultural competence training for faculty enhance intercultural communication. This study contributes to the existing literature by exploring specific policy options that can influence the cultural competence of academic and administrative personnel, thereby affecting regular interactions between educators and students. Cultural competence education acts as a mediator between policies and various forms of institutional support, as highlighted in Suleiman et al.'s (2023) research on the mediation of institutional support. Participant narratives provide insights into how policies might foster the development of more effective and culturally sensitive support networks. Wang et al. (2022) further support this hypothesis by demonstrating that policies supporting faculty training in cultural competence positively impact institutional support. By examining the real-world impact of regulations on institutional culture and the ability to provide tailored support for international students, this study contributes to the existing body of literature (Riccomini et al., 2021). Analysis of social support mediation offers additional insights into how policies could influence students' cross-cultural adaptability by examining the relationship between students' social connections and institutional support. This study found that policies supporting social integration activities enhance social support networks for international students, consistent with Choi et al. (2024). This study explores how social support mediates policy objectives, cultural adaptability, and relationship development, offering valuable insights. It synthesizes research findings and literature to explore how institutional support, cross-cultural adaptability, and transnational educational policies influence Northern Chinese students' experiences at Thai universities.

Integrating participant narratives with previous research enhances our understanding of how cultural competence training, policies, and social support shape foreign students' educational experiences. The findings support earlier research and enrich our understanding of efforts to create inclusive educational environments. Overall, this synthesis provides a nuanced view of the interactions between transnational educational policies, cross-cultural adaptability, and institutional support. The study enhances current scholarship by offering practical insights into how policies, cultural competence training, and social support collectively mould the educational journeys of Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education. The findings underscore the pivotal role of policies in shaping adaptation experiences and support mechanisms for international students. Looking ahead, the study puts forth several propositions:

Proposition 1: Transactional educational policies have significant impact on cross-cultural adaptability.

Proposition 2: Transactional educational policies have significant impact on institutional support.

Proposition 3: Cultural competence training mediates the relationship between transactional educational policies and both cross-cultural adaptability and institutional support for international students.

Proposition 4: Social Support mediates the relationship between transactional educational policies and both cross-cultural adaptability and institutional support for international students.

Conclusion

In the conclusion, this study examines institutional support, cross-cultural adaptability, and transnational educational policies affecting Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education institutions. It explores regulatory frameworks, cultural adaptability, and support systems within academic institutions to illustrate how policies impact the educational experiences of international students. Policies emphasizing cross-cultural awareness and cultural competence training directly enhance Northern Chinese students' adaptability across cultures. Participant narratives illustrate that these policies promote tolerance and inclusivity, consistent with previous research demonstrating a positive correlation between culturally sensitive policies and adaptation. The study also investigates institutional support, highlighting how policies shape the provision of support services within educational institutions. Research indicates that policies supporting foreign students enhance institutional support, underscoring the relationship between policies and institutional commitment to fostering an inclusive environment. These findings contribute to significant literature on policy impacts on the academic environment of international students. Moreover, cultural competence training emerges as a mediator influencing institutional support, cross-cultural adaptability, and policy outcomes. Training for faculty and staff enhances academic inclusivity and multicultural interactions, aligning with prior research and exploring policy implications for international students' daily experiences.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study's theoretical implications shed light on international educational policy, cross-cultural adaptability, and institutional support, enhancing our understanding of policy's influence on international students' cultural adjustment. It enriches theoretical foundations by exploring the practical impacts of social support and cultural competence training. Both academic staff and students directly engage with these policies, advancing conceptual frameworks that address policy effects. The research demonstrates how policies prioritizing international students impact the accessibility and effectiveness of support services within educational institutions. It underscores the symbiotic relationship between policy and institutional commitment, illustrating how organizations can

actively cultivate environments that cater to international students' needs. This contributes to the development of theoretical frameworks for analysing support system dynamics across various academic contexts.

This study has implications for policymakers, educators, and organizations supporting international students. Policymakers can utilize this data to enhance or develop new cultural competence training mandates for educators and staff, fostering greater inclusivity in education. They should evaluate how these measures can bolster institutional services and social support networks for international students. This research offers practical guidance for educators and academic institutions, emphasizing the importance of ongoing cultural competence training to support professional development. Engaging in such training enables educators to better understand and meet the needs of international students, creating a more inclusive and culturally sensitive learning environment. Educators are encouraged to promote or participate in social integration initiatives, recognizing how policies influence social support networks and contribute to students' sense of belonging. Educational policies should account for the diverse needs of international students, prompting institutions to enhance support services and tailor programs specifically for Northern Chinese students in Thailand. Understanding the impact of regulations on institutional support, educational institutions can develop comprehensive initiatives to facilitate the success and well-being of international students.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite offering valuable insights, this study has limitations that must be acknowledged. Its applicability to other cultural contexts or student groups beyond Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education is constrained. Generalizing findings to diverse contexts requires caution due to varying cultural norms and educational systems. A broader and more diverse sample size could enhance understanding of international educational cross-cultural processes. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data from semi-structured interviews introduces potential biases. Respondents may provide socially desirable responses or fail to fully articulate their experiences. Despite efforts to create an open interview environment, the subjective nature of qualitative research calls into question the robustness of its conclusions. Combining qualitative observations with quantitative measurements or employing multiple data collection methods could enhance the reliability of future studies. Additionally, the study's qualitative design makes it challenging to establish causal links between variables. While mediation analyses shed light on relationships between cross-cultural adaptability, social support, transnational educational policy, cultural competence training, and institutional support, the cross-sectional nature of the study precludes making causal inferences. Longitudinal studies on Northern Chinese students' development could offer deeper insights into the complex interaction among these variables over time. The study also overlooked policymakers and educators who shape global educational policies. Understanding these dynamics can shed light on policymaking challenges and goals. A multi-stakeholder approach

involving legislators, educators, and administrators could enhance future research by advancing understanding of how policies impact international students. The study concluded by exploring formally institutionalized social support. However, informal social networks, such as peer exchanges and community-building initiatives, remain underexplored. Investigating these aspects could clarify the intricate relationship between social and institutional support and their impact on cross-cultural adaptability.

Given these limitations, several research directions emerge. Comparative studies across different ethnic groups and educational contexts could elucidate how transnational educational policies impact international students. Exploring how cultural variables influence policy effectiveness may uncover whether policies have context-specific or universal effects. Employing mixed-methods research designs could mitigate biases inherent in self-reported data. Integrating qualitative and quantitative data would offer a more comprehensive understanding of interactions between policy components. Quantitative approaches could also identify trends and patterns that qualitative studies alone may overlook. Additionally, longitudinal studies on international students' experiences could assess the enduring effects of transnational education policies on institutional support and cross-cultural adaptation. Such studies would track how students' lives evolve and improve over the course of their academic journeys. Given the paucity of research on educators and policymakers, future studies could benefit from a multidisciplinary approach. Insights from those who formulate and implement international education policies could reveal their intentions and the challenges they face in translating these intentions into tangible benefits for foreign students. Lastly, investigating community and informal social support programs could enhance our understanding of international students' social environments. Exploring student-led initiatives, informal networks, and cultural groups would deepen our understanding of cross-cultural adaptation and institutional support.

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