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## Article

# Impact of Transnational Education Policies on Cross-Cultural Adaptability and Institutional Support for Northern Chinese Students in Thai Universities

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## Abstract

The principal aim of this study is to explore the complex interrelationships between transnational educational policies, cross-cultural adaptability, and institutional support. Using a qualitative methodology, the research employs semi-structured interviews to examine how policies influence the cross-cultural adaptability of Northern Chinese students and the nature of the support offered by Thai higher education institutions. The study seeks to highlight the mediating roles of cultural competence training and social support in shaping students' experiences, thereby providing a detailed understanding of the practical implications of policies in a non-Western academic context. This qualitative investigation involved 17 semi-structured interviews with Northern Chinese students attending Thai higher education institutions. The interviews continued until data saturation was reached, ensuring an in-depth exploration of the participants' narratives. A three-step thematic analysis was applied to examine the relationships between transnational educational policies, cross-cultural adaptability, and institutional support, as well as to investigate the mediating effects of cultural competence training and social support. The study's findings reveal the significant influence of transnational educational policies on the cross-cultural adaptability of Northern Chinese students. The research uncovers the intricate relationships between policies, cultural competence training, social support, and institutional assistance. By analysing the participants' narratives, the study provides empirical insights into how policies are translated into tangible outcomes, impacting students' capacity to adjust to and navigate a new cultural and academic environment. This research adds to the existing literature by offering 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 identifying the mediating roles of cultural competence training and social support. The significance of the study lies in its potential to inform policymakers, educators, and institutions on how to foster more inclusive and supportive environments for international students. By emphasising the unique perspectives of Northern Chinese students, this study enriches the literature on transnational higher education, cultural competence, and student support, and offers a foundation for future research in diverse cultural and educational settings.

## Keywords

Transnational Education, Cross-Cultural Adaptability, Institutional Support, Cultural Competence Training, Northern Chinese students.

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## Introduction

Globalisation has reshaped higher education, leading to a significant increase in the number of international students. In the realm of international education, students from diverse cultural backgrounds engage more frequently, creating both challenges and opportunities for educational institutions (Molise, Botma, & Van Jaarsveldt, 2023). Understanding the intricate relationships between institutional support, cross-cultural adaptability, and transnational educational policies is crucial, especially as the number of foreign students continues to rise. A unique case study of Northern Chinese students at Thai higher education institutions provides valuable insights into these dynamics. By examining the influence of transnational educational policies on foreign students' cross-cultural adaptability and the nature of institutional support, this study enhances our understanding of how policy frameworks shape academic experiences.

The global migration of students has necessitated significant changes within educational institutions (Huang et al., 2022). Language barriers, social adjustments, and intellectual challenges all contribute to the difficulties international students face when transitioning to a new academic and cultural environment. Consequently, higher education institutions must develop support systems that cater to the diverse needs of their student body. Thailand, with its range of academic programmes and vibrant cultural environment, has become an increasingly popular destination for international students (Chiang & Chen, 2022). However, Northern Chinese students face unique cultural challenges within Thailand's academic framework. This research, grounded in the experiences, narratives, and perspectives of students, provides empirical support for the interrelations between institutional support, cultural adaptability, and policy frameworks.

The research investigates the impact of transnational education policy, cross-cultural adaptation, and institutional support on Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education, recognising the interdependent nature of these factors. Transnational education policies facilitate the social integration of international students (Melzi, Schick, & Wuest, 2023). These policies employ systematic methods to identify and assist diverse students, including cultural competency training for staff and faculty. Previous studies indicate that transnational educational policies have significant effects on international students. Jiang (2022) found that inclusive and culturally sensitive environments contribute to higher student satisfaction, while Wong et al. (2023) highlight the importance of regulations that support the integration of students from diverse cultural backgrounds into classroom settings. Cross-cultural adaptability, essential for the academic and cultural success of international students, is influenced by individual traits, cultural differences, and institutional support systems. Transnational education enhances this adaptability through cultural competence training, which has been shown to aid students in adjusting to new environments (Vella, White, & Livingston, 2022). The resources, services, and efforts of educational institutions play a critical role in supporting the academic and social integration of international students. Liu, Bredin and Cao (2020) demonstrated that institutional support significantly impacts international students' academic performance and well-being. The effectiveness and accessibility of support services can also be influenced by transnational education policies.

Previous research has rarely addressed the environmental factors that influence international students' educational and cultural experiences (Foteva, Fisher, & Wyrwoll, 2023). Studies focusing on non-Western students are limited due to the predominance of Western-centric research. This study examines the experiences of Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education to provide a deeper understanding of institutional support, cross-cultural adaptability, and transnational educational policies. While global educational policies exert a strong influence on international students' daily lives (Melzi et al., 2023), their effects remain underexplored in the literature. Although policies are theoretically significant, empirical evidence measuring their impact on students is scarce. There is limited understanding of how social support and cultural competence training influence international students' outcomes within the context of transnational educational policy (Thoma, 2023). Visualising the intermediary mechanisms of policy provides a clearer understanding of these complex dynamics.

This study explores the intricate connections between institutional support, cross-cultural adaptability, and transnational education policy for Northern Chinese students in Thailand. Qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, are employed to address various research objectives. The research investigates the impact of transnational educational policies on the cross-cultural adaptability of Northern Chinese students, while also examining Thailand's cultural setting and students' adaptability. Additionally, the study explores how cultural competence training programmes enhance support services tailored to the specific needs of Northern Chinese students. This research has wide-reaching implications for international education stakeholders. It offers

policymakers tangible evidence of the benefits of global educational efforts and provides educational institutions with insights into the support needs of Northern Chinese students. Understanding the interplay between social support, cultural competence training, and institutional activities can help make academic institutions more inclusive, ultimately enhancing the academic and overall development of international students.

### Literature Review

International education has become increasingly significant as educational institutions globally confront the challenges and opportunities arising from a growing number of internationally mobile students. The literature explores various facets such as cultural adaptation, institutional support, and global educational strategies, highlighting the complexity of this issue. [Xiao et al. \(2020\)](#) stress the importance of cross-cultural competencies and how foreign education can reshape students' worldviews. This research underscores the significance of understanding the processes of cross-cultural adaptation as students engage with educational institutions in host countries. Scholars have increasingly directed attention towards institutional frameworks that influence international education, alongside individual experiences. [Brown, Sadik and Xu \(2021\)](#) examine the impact of international educational policies on student mobility and academic performance. [Ylimaki \(2023\)](#) suggests that educational policies evolve over time, with these changes affecting the educational experiences of international students. [Liu, Liang and Zhang \(2023\)](#) critique policy objectives that, while supporting internationalisation, may fail to adequately meet the needs of students. [Foteva et al. \(2023\)](#) also call for research into how institutional policies influence the everyday lives of international students. This study highlights the critical need to examine the effects of transnational educational policies on the holistic education of internationally mobile students.

#### *Cross-Cultural Adaptability*

For international students in higher education abroad, cross-cultural adaptability is crucial. [Lim \(2021\)](#) defines multifaceted cross-cultural adaptability as the ability to thrive in diverse cultural contexts. International education, particularly the experience of Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education institutions, presents numerous challenges as students adjust to a new academic and cultural environment. Cross-cultural adaptability plays a significant role in influencing foreign students' academic success, mental health, and overall well-being, as highlighted by [Câmara-Costa et al. \(2021\)](#). The adjustment strategies employed by Northern Chinese students and the cultural differences between China and Thailand require careful examination due to their complexity. Thai higher education proves challenging for Northern Chinese students, particularly due to language barriers. Academic and social success is often contingent upon effective communication, and language barriers can pose significant obstacles. [Ruan, Zheng and Toom \(2020\)](#) emphasise the critical role of language proficiency in the academic and social integration of international students. Classes conducted in Thai or English may present difficulties for Mandarin-speaking Northern Chinese students, impacting their ability to comprehend lectures, participate in class discussions, and engage with instructors and peers. Both academic and social language use must be considered when examining cross-cultural adaptation. Additionally, the cultural differences between Thailand and China contribute to the struggles faced by Northern Chinese students. [Banks, Campbell and Ghonasgi \(2023\)](#) highlight that disparities in communication styles, social norms, and academic expectations can complicate the adaptation process for international students.

#### *Transnational Educational Policies*

Transnational education policies significantly shape the experiences of Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education. According to [Fung and Lo \(2023\)](#), transnational educational policies encompass laws, customs, and frameworks that influence the educational experiences of foreign students. Northern Chinese students in Thailand are required to comply with various standards, including those related to admission, language proficiency, and institutional expectations. [McCallen and Johnson \(2020\)](#) argue that understanding institutional support and cross-cultural adaptability requires an awareness of how these policies are implemented and their subsequent impact on student performance. In the context of internationalisation, higher education institutions frequently adopt transnational teaching approaches. [Chonka \(2024\)](#) observes that universities and governments aim to create a global learning environment and a diverse student body. Thai higher education policies impact Northern Chinese students by focusing on cultural competence training, language proficiency, and diversity-

oriented admissions policies. The extent to which these policies address the needs of Northern Chinese students is crucial. Targeted support can help these students adjust academically to Thailand's educational system. Language needs are a significant factor in shaping global educational strategies for Northern Chinese students, as Mandarin-speaking students may face challenges in Thai or English-medium courses.

Ridell and Walldén (2023) highlight that language barriers can hinder academic success, limit communication between students and professors, and result in student isolation. It is essential to assess how well language requirements align with the linguistic needs of Northern Chinese students and how effectively support services address these needs. Policies that support the language development of international students can enhance their cross-cultural adaptability. Transnational education policies that promote cultural competence training are particularly beneficial for Northern Chinese students. These training programs offer advantages not only to students but also to professionals and instructors, enhancing their understanding and ability to engage with diverse cultural perspectives.

### ***Institutional Support***

Institutional support plays a pivotal role in fostering a healthy and inclusive educational environment for international students, particularly for Northern Chinese students navigating Thai higher education. Institutional support encompasses a range of activities, resources, and services designed to facilitate students' academic and personal success. Zhou (2024) emphasises various aspects of institutional support, including academic assistance and the facilitation of students' adjustment to new academic and cultural settings. Northern Chinese students, in particular, require substantial institutional support to thrive in their studies. Language support, academic counselling, and tutoring are essential to the academic success of international students. Wei (2022) asserts that international students require academic assistance to understand course prerequisites, select appropriate courses, and make informed educational decisions. For Northern Chinese students in Thailand, guidance is crucial to overcoming language barriers, understanding academic expectations, and meeting the standards of the host university. Language support and tutoring play a vital role in helping these students succeed academically and tackle linguistic challenges, as noted by Ruan et al. (2020). The effectiveness of these programs in addressing the needs of international students underscores the importance of providing personalised institutional support. It is essential for institutions to assess the efficacy and accessibility of academic support to ensure it meets the needs of Northern Chinese students.

In addition to academic support, Northern Chinese students benefit from socio-cultural assistance. Counseling services, orientation programmes, and cultural integration initiatives are crucial in helping students adapt to both the academic and social aspects of their new environment. Lyu, Shepherd and Lee (2023) highlight the importance of counselling for the mental health of international students, noting that Northern Chinese students may particularly benefit from culturally sensitive therapeutic services to assist them in transitioning to a new culture and education system (Ducker, 2022). Organisational and cultural orientation programmes are essential for familiarising students with the host country, academic requirements, university facilities, and support services. These orientation sessions enable Northern Chinese students to adjust to Thai higher education, connect with peers, and learn about local cultural practices. The early integration of Northern Chinese students into the social environment of their host institution is critical to their well-being. Cultural integration initiatives, such as cultural events, peer mentorship, and cross-cultural courses, promote social adaptability and create a supportive atmosphere. These activities extend beyond academic support to enhance the overall student experience, as noted by Anufrieva (2022).

### ***Cultural Competence Training***

As Thai institutions enrol an increasing number of Northern Chinese students, cultural competence training for both teachers and students is essential to navigate the growing diversity in higher education. Misunderstandings arising from complex cross-cultural interactions can lead to uncomfortable discussions, a less inclusive academic environment, and misinterpretations (O'Rourke et al., 2021). This training goes beyond mere cultural awareness by equipping learners with the skills, attitudes, and knowledge required to engage effectively with people from diverse cultures. Faculty members, in particular, must undergo cultural competence training to foster an inclusive classroom environment. Vella et al. (2022) assert that instructors have a significant impact on international students' educational experiences. Cultural competence training helps teachers understand cultural norms, overcome biases in education and assessment, and adopt more inclusive teaching practices. It enables educators to assess international students objectively and create a welcoming learning atmosphere.

For Northern Chinese students studying in Thailand, the presence of culturally competent faculty is crucial for both academic success and cultural adaptation (McCoy et al., 2022). It is essential that teachers' cultural competence training specifically addresses the unique challenges faced by Northern Chinese students, as well as the broader cultural differences they encounter. Understanding aspects of Chinese collectivism, hierarchical structures, and Northern Chinese communication styles is fundamental. Faculty training programmes should aim to integrate diverse perspectives into the curriculum and create an inclusive academic climate that acknowledges and values students' cultural backgrounds (Henson & Drame, 2022). Cultural competence training also plays a vital role in helping students adapt both academically and socially. It enhances students' communication skills, cultural awareness, and intercultural competence. Northern Chinese students, in particular, require cultural competence training tailored to their academic objectives, language preferences, and cultural heritage. Jiang (2022) suggests that cultural competence training should provide students with opportunities to apply their knowledge in real-world situations. As language is a key component of cross-cultural communication, it is important that such training addresses the language challenges faced by Northern Chinese students (Tatarinova et al., 2022). A comprehensive understanding of language, colloquialisms, and international communication styles is critical for successful cross-cultural interactions.

## Methodology

### Participants

The qualitative study involved seventeen Northern Chinese students enrolled in higher education institutions in Thailand, specialising in various fields of study. To ensure a representative sample across diverse academic disciplines, years of residence in Thailand, and educational levels (undergraduate and postgraduate), participants were selected with care Table 1. Recruitment was conducted through departmental announcements and student groups, with study materials distributed to encourage participation. Applicants were screened based on academic rank, field of study, and country of origin. Participation was voluntary, and all participants were assured anonymity. The inclusion criteria were designed to ensure that participants had relevant first-hand experiences directly related to the objectives of the study.

**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 served as the primary data collection method in this study Table 2. This approach was chosen for its flexibility in capturing the diverse perspectives of the seventeen Northern Chinese students enrolled in higher education institutions in Thailand. A thorough analysis of cross-cultural adaptation,



institutional support, cultural competence training, and social support was facilitated by the development of an interview guide, which was informed by key themes identified in the literature. Students from various academic fields, educational levels, and lengths of residency expressed interest in participating, having received the study materials through university channels. Eligibility was confirmed through a vetting process in accordance with predefined criteria. The interviews, conducted in private settings to promote open dialogue, lasted between sixty and ninety minutes. These time constraints allowed participants to provide in-depth accounts of their experiences.

**Table 2: Interview Guidelines.**

Variable	Interview Questions
Cross-cultural Adaptability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can you describe your experiences adapting to the cultural differences between China and Thailand within the academic environment?</li> <li>2. What challenges have you encountered in terms of language, communication, or social norms, and how have you navigated these challenges?</li> <li>3. In what ways have you actively engaged with the Thai culture to enhance your cross-cultural adaptability?</li> </ol>
Influence of Policies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do you perceive the impact of educational policies on your overall experience as a Northern Chinese student in Thai higher education?</li> <li>2. Have you noticed any specific policies that either facilitated or hindered your adaptation and academic success?</li> <li>3. Do you feel that policies align with the needs of Northern Chinese students, particularly in terms of language requirements and cultural training?</li> </ol>
Institutional Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can you share your experiences with institutional support services, such as academic advising, counselling, or orientation programs?</li> <li>2. How effective do you find these support services in addressing the challenges you face as an international student?</li> <li>3. Have you observed any gaps or areas where institutional support could be improved for Northern Chinese students?</li> </ol>
Cultural Competence Training	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What has been your experience with cultural competence training provided by the institution?</li> <li>2. In what ways do you believe cultural competence training has influenced your interactions with faculty, staff, and peers?</li> <li>3. How do you perceive the role of cultural competence training in enhancing your overall cross-cultural adaptability?</li> </ol>
Social Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can you describe the role of peer interactions and social networks in your experience as a Northern Chinese student in Thai higher education?</li> <li>2. Have you participated in any mentorship programs, and if so, how have they contributed to your sense of community and well-being?</li> <li>3. How do you perceive the availability and effectiveness of institutional mechanisms, such as counselling services and cultural exchange programs?</li> </ol>

The data were analysed using a rigorous and systematic three-step thematic framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach facilitated a thorough exploration of the rich qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews. The first step involved familiarisation with the data Table 3. All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were carefully examined to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. This initial phase allowed the researcher to delve into the participants' narratives and identify potential themes, including institutional support, social support, cross-cultural adaptation, and cultural competence training. In the second phase, prototype codes were generated through a meticulous line-by-line coding of the transcripts. Key statements or comments related to the study's themes were assigned codes. This step ensured that a wide range of perspectives and experiences were represented in the data. The codes were then grouped based on recurring patterns across all participants' experiences. The final stage involved the development of themes. The codes were organised into overarching subjects that comprehensively addressed the main concerns of the study. The themes were then examined, refined, and discussed with another researcher to

enhance analytical validity and reliability. This collaborative approach helped eliminate biases and ensured a more robust and complete interpretation of the data.

**Table 3:** *Stages of Thematic Analysis.*

Stage	Description
Stage 1: Data Familiarization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transcription of interview recordings was carried out meticulously to ensure accuracy and completeness.</li> <li>• The researcher immersed themselves in the transcripts to gain a deep understanding of the participants' narratives.</li> <li>• Initial readings were focused on comprehending the content and identifying potential themes related to the research questions.</li> <li>• This stage aimed to establish a solid foundation for subsequent coding and theme development.</li> <li>• A systematic coding process was employed, involving line-by-line coding of the transcripts.</li> </ul>
Stage 2: Generating Initial Codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Codes were assigned to significant statements or phrases related to cross-cultural adaptation, institutional support, cultural competence training, and social support.</li> <li>• The coding process was iterative, allowing for a thorough examination of the data and the identification of diverse perspectives.</li> <li>• Codes were collated into broader categories to capture the overarching themes reflecting the participants' experiences.</li> <li>• The codes were organized into coherent and comprehensive themes that encapsulated the key aspects of the research questions.</li> </ul>
Stage 3: Theme Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An iterative process of reviewing, revising, and discussing with a second researcher was undertaken to refine and enhance the themes.</li> <li>• Themes were continually reassessed and validated through ongoing discussions and peer debriefing to ensure a robust and reliable analysis.</li> <li>• The final themes were structured to reflect the complexities inherent in the cross-cultural adaptation process, institutional support, cultural competence training, and social support.</li> </ul>

The researchers-maintained awareness of their biases and positionality throughout the thematic analysis process. Reflexivity was employed to minimise preconceived notions, ensuring that the analysis was guided by the participants' perspectives. The iterative cycle of theme analysis allowed for the continuous development of new themes, thereby deepening the understanding of participants' viewpoints. Regular debriefing sessions with other researchers provided an opportunity to broaden perspectives and enhance the rigor of the study. For validation, member checking was incorporated. After reviewing preliminary findings, participants were asked to verify the accuracy and relevance of the identified themes in relation to their personal experiences. This constant process of validation and refinement contributed to the reliability and credibility of the research. Data saturation played a crucial role in shaping the analysis. Saturation was reached after 17 interviews, indicating that no new themes or insights were emerging from additional interviews. This approach strengthened the study's credibility and trustworthiness, ensuring that the themes accurately represented the complex and diverse experiences of the participants.

## Results

This study explores the intricate relationships between transnational educational policy, cross-cultural adaptability, and institutional support for Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education, aiming to understand their impact on international students' academic experiences. Transnational education policies influence Northern Chinese students' institutional and social support as well as their cross-cultural adaptation. The firsthand narratives illustrate how such policies affect ethnically diverse classrooms. Cultural competency education and social training programs are crucial in explaining how these policies shape the support systems

within educational institutions. The results section provides a detailed account of participant experiences and references to research, illustrating how policy frameworks, student adaptation processes, and support systems collectively enhance the academic experiences and outcomes for international students.

### ***Transnational Educational Policies Influence Cross-Cultural Adaptability***

A study examined how transnational education impacts Northern Chinese students' cross-cultural adaptability in Thai higher education, focusing on the influence of policy on their experiences and adaptability. Participants shared insights into how various policies facilitated their adjustment to Thai culture and academic life. As P5 stated, "The policies that promote internationalization initiatives and cultural exchange programs have greatly enhanced my comprehension of Thai culture and facilitated my social integration." P12 highlighted the significance of language proficiency requirements, noting, "The language proficiency requirements set by educational policies push students to improve their Thai language skills, which is crucial for effective communication and adaptation within the academic environment." This reflects how participants perceive the role of policies in addressing language barriers and fostering cross-cultural adaptability.

A key theme in the study was the need to adapt transnational education strategies to the local cultural context. P7 remarked, "Policies that are culturally sensitive and tailored to the local context are more effective," emphasising the importance of context-specific policies. The study indicates that Northern Chinese students in Thailand face unique challenges and that policies should not merely align with globalisation goals but be mindful of local cultural dynamics. Participants also noted that cross-cultural recognition and training programs significantly enhanced their adaptability. P14 expressed, "Our relationships have been strengthened as a result of implementing standards that mandate cultural competence training for faculty and staff," underlining the positive impact of such initiatives on building more approachable academic environments. The findings underscore the need for policies that go beyond administrative measures to actively support culturally appropriate education. These results align with prior literature, which supports the positive relationship between culturally responsive policies and improved cross-cultural adaptability among international students.

### ***Transnational Educational Policies Influence Institutional Support***

The influence of transnational education policies on institutional support for Northern Chinese students in Thailand reveals a complex relationship between institutional support mechanisms and policy frameworks. The effectiveness and availability of institutional support were frequently highlighted, with several participants noting the positive impact of policies on the establishment of specialized offices and resources. As P8 observed, "Policies highlighting the significance of international student support made the establishment of specialized offices and resources possible." This indicates that policies are driving the development of institutional support structures. P15 added, "Institutions prioritize our well-being when policies mandate a comprehensive array of support services," reflecting the growing commitment to ensuring international students' success through policy-driven support systems.

Participants also stressed the need for a holistic support system, encompassing orientation training, counseling, and other essential services. As P11 stated, policies that focus on faculty and staff training on the needs of foreign students have a significant impact, "Proactive support answers our difficulties." This illustrates how regulations shape the institutional culture to better serve the needs of international students. According to [Luong et al. \(2023\)](#), the integration of international students into the institution is strongly influenced by policies, as they encourage universities to allocate resources and develop programs that support these students. [Sahlberg and Stringer \(2023\)](#) further assert that faculty cultural competence training enhances institutional support by fostering an inclusive and tolerant learning environment. Participants confirmed that such training improves teachers' and staff members' ability to offer effective support, highlighting the positive role that policy frameworks play in shaping institutional support systems for Northern Chinese students in Thailand.

### ***Cultural Competence Training Mediates the Relationship Between Transnational Educational Policies and Cross-Cultural Adaptability***

The study underscores the significant impact of cultural competence training on cross-cultural adaptability and transnational educational policy, particularly for Northern Chinese students in Thailand. Participants highlighted how policies that mandate cultural competence training for faculty and staff influence



their ability to support international students. As P4 emphasized, "Cultural competence training policies are crucial in building an inclusive academic environment by focusing on faculty cross-cultural knowledge." This highlights the importance of policy in shaping faculty behaviour and ensuring they are equipped to assist international students in their academic journey. The study also reveals that these policies contribute to altering the educational culture, making it more conducive to international students. P10 noted that "Teachers' cultural competence training affects daily interactions with students," demonstrating that effective communication between students and instructors is essential for successful adaptation. This aligns with [Alhosani \(2022\)](#), who confirmed that faculty cultural competence training policies facilitate cross-cultural interactions, making the academic environment more welcoming for international students.

P16 added that laws requiring continuous and structured cultural competence training for faculty and staff have a lasting impact, stressing the need for comprehensive initiatives that go beyond one-time seminars. This idea is supported by [Yang, Lawrence and Grøver \(2023\)](#), who advocated for ongoing and thorough cultural competence training. The study's findings align with participants' views, affirming that policies promoting continuous learning contribute to a more inclusive and supportive environment for international students. Ultimately, the research demonstrates that cultural competence training is a direct policy outcome that enhances students' ability to adapt to new academic contexts. As P14 explained, "Cultural competence training connects policies to our ability to adapt," highlighting how these policies provide students with the tools to navigate cultural differences and succeed academically in a foreign environment. This reinforces the essential role of cultural competence training in shaping both the academic experience and cross-cultural adaptability of international students.

### ***Cultural Competence Training Mediates the Relationship Between Transnational Educational Policies and Institutional Support***

The study delves into the significant role of institutional support in shaping cultural competence training and its influence on transnational educational policies, particularly in the context of Northern Chinese students in Thailand. Respondent P9 emphasized the importance of cultural competence training in the development of institutional support, highlighting that policies promoting culturally responsive training enhance the effectiveness and specificity of support services. As P9 stated, "Cultural competence training rules boost support service efficacy and specificity," underlining the necessity for support systems that are not only textually robust but also culturally sensitive and tailored to the unique needs of international students. This sentiment is reinforced by P13, who observed that "Learning about our cultural history is the foundation of support services. It makes these services more relevant and accessible, improving their efficacy." This shows the practical impact of cultural competence training on making institutional support services more effective and relevant for international students. [LaForett and De Marco \(2020\)](#) corroborate these findings, demonstrating that cultural competence training initiatives significantly enhance institutional support for international students, thereby fostering an environment that is both supportive and culturally aware.

Moreover, the study highlights how cultural competence training bridges the gap between institutional policies and the financial support mechanisms available to international students. As P5 noted, "Financial staff that receive training in cultural competence are guaranteed to have a thorough awareness of the unique financial challenges we encounter," indicating that culturally competent financial support staff can better address the specific challenges faced by Northern Chinese students. This alignment between cultural competence training and financial support policies can significantly improve the accessibility and efficiency of financial services for international students. [Alhosani \(2022\)](#) found that cultural competence training mediates the effectiveness of financial support services, further validating the positive impact of such training on institutional support mechanisms. The study also underscores the need for policies that ensure consistent and comprehensive cultural competence training. According to P3, "Since cultural competence training is part of their professional growth, academics and staff always provide culturally sensitive support," emphasizing that continuous professional development in cultural competence ensures that support services remain relevant and effective. This continuous process highlights the importance of policy frameworks that structure and maintain the consistency of cultural competence training, ultimately benefiting international students' academic and personal experiences.

### ***Social Support Mediates the Relationship Between Transnational Educational Policies and Cross-Cultural Adaptability***

The study highlights the critical role that social support plays in mediating the relationship between cross-cultural adaptability and transnational educational policies for Northern Chinese students in Thailand. Respondent P7 emphasized the importance of policies that encourage student interaction, stating, "Policies that promote activities that foster interaction among students contribute directly to the formation of social support networks." This remark underscores the need for policies that go beyond simplification to create opportunities for genuine connections, thereby fostering robust support networks that are essential for international students' adaptation.

Respondent P14 further illustrated this point by noting, "Policies that advocate for mentoring initiatives and peer support endeavours positively impact the establishment of a resilient social support system." The creation of an environment where students can seek advice and form meaningful connections is crucial. This type of social support not only helps students adjust socially but also aids in meeting policy goals by promoting interaction and support. Li and Peng (2022) observed that social integration initiatives significantly enhance social support for international students, which aligns with the findings of this study and supports the argument that policies should be designed to strengthen social support networks. Additionally, P12 highlighted the mediating role of social support in helping students navigate cultural differences, stating, "Social support serves as an intermediary between policies and our ability to comprehend cultural nuances." This suggests that social support plays a vital role in reducing the gap between policies and students' cross-cultural adaptability, emphasizing its practical importance. Social support thus acts as a key enabler of students' cultural integration and adaptability, reinforcing the need for policies that not only focus on academic but also social support systems.

### ***Social Support Mediates the Relationship Between Transnational Educational Policies and Institutional Support***

The study sheds light on how social support mediates the relationship between institutional support and transnational educational policies, specifically for Northern Chinese students in Thailand. Respondent P11 emphasized the importance of policies that foster social interactions, stating, "Policies that promote social interactions among students and cultivate a sense of community among them directly contribute to the growth and progress of institutional support." This reflects the significance of creating an environment that goes beyond mere policy compliance, encouraging authentic student connections and fostering institutional support. It underscores the need for policies that not only mandate interactions but actively nurture a supportive community, enhancing both social and academic support systems.

P6 further highlighted the role of policies in shaping academic social support, asserting, "Policies mandating mentoring programs and encouraging peer interactions directly contribute to the establishment of a robust social support system." By establishing such policies, institutions can create a supportive, guiding atmosphere that aids students' integration into their new academic environment. The study confirms the value of social support in translating policy intentions into tangible student experiences, reinforcing the practical implications of policies that focus on fostering strong student connections. This aligns with Ma et al. (2022), who found a significant correlation between social integration strategies and institutional support for international students.

Respondent P9 discussed the interplay between social support and financial support, stating, "Social support serves as an intermediary between financial support services and policy implementation." This observation highlights how social support can bridge the gap between institutional policies and the specific needs of students, such as financial assistance. In an environment where policies encourage social interaction, students can more easily access resources like financial counseling and support. Russo et al. (2023) further supported this view, showing that social support mediates the relationship between financial support systems and institutional regulations. This emphasizes the integral role of social support in not only enhancing students' cultural adaptability but also ensuring they have access to the resources necessary for academic and personal success.

## **Discussion**

This chapter delves into the intricate relationships between institutional support, cross-cultural adaptation, and transnational educational policies affecting Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education. By integrating participant observations and relevant research, it illustrates how regulations influence institutional support services and the cultural dynamics within academic settings. The study highlights the pivotal role that

transnational education practices play in facilitating Northern Chinese students' cross-cultural adaptation, underscoring the importance of policies in fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Participants' challenges reinforce the critical nature of these regulations in shaping a welcoming academic culture. Research by Louie and Sierschynski (2020) found that inclusive campuses significantly enhance cross-cultural understanding and the sense of belonging among international students. The current study supports this by showing how culturally sensitive strategies contribute to improved adaptability for Northern Chinese students. Additionally, Cohen and Calderón-Aponte (2021) have demonstrated that international education regulations influence the capacity of educational institutions to offer, make accessible, and effectively deploy support services. Participants' feedback aligns with these findings, suggesting that international student policies not only increase the level and quality of institutional support but also ensure that such services are better tailored to students' needs.

The study further extends this research by exploring how institutional regulations impact students' daily experiences and the support networks available to them, thus contributing to the field of mediation research. A key finding is that cultural competency training serves as a significant mediator between cross-cultural adaptation and policy. Ren, Islam and Chadee (2023) highlighted the role of cultural competency training in facilitating student adaptation, a perspective reinforced by participants who recognized the far-reaching impact of such training. Kamau et al. (2023) also noted that faculty cultural competency training improves intercultural communication, a notion echoed in the current study, which identifies policy options that can affect academic and administrative staff's cultural competency and, by extension, teacher-student interactions.

Furthermore, McCallen and Johnson (2020) found that cultural competency education serves as a buffer, connecting policies with institutional support. The participants in this study illustrated how policies could enhance culturally sensitive support networks, a finding consistent with Jiang's (2022) research, which confirmed that faculty cultural competency training policies positively influence institutional support. This study builds upon the existing literature by examining how such regulations shape institutional culture, thereby influencing the ability of universities to provide bespoke support for international students. Finally, the analysis of social support mediation further emphasizes how policies impact students' cross-cultural adaptation through the strengthening of social linkages and institutional support. By focusing on the role of social support in the adaptation process, this study contributes valuable insights into the ways in which institutional regulations can facilitate or hinder international students' integration into their academic and social environments.

This study found that social integration initiatives play a significant role in improving international students' social support networks, reinforcing existing research on the importance of social support in cross-cultural adaptation. However, as this study explores the complex mechanisms through which social support mediates the relationship between policy objectives, students' cultural adaptability, and the development of meaningful relationships, it offers deeper insights into the nuances of these processes. In the discussion, the study synthesizes the research findings with existing literature, further exploring how institutional support, cross-cultural adaptability, and transnational educational policies interact to shape the experiences of Northern Chinese students at Thai universities. By integrating participant narratives with previous research, the study enhances our understanding of how cultural competence training, policies, and social support contribute to international students' educational experiences. The findings support prior research and expand the knowledge base by highlighting the real-world implications of initiatives aimed at creating more inclusive and supportive educational environments.

The synthesis of these findings with existing literature provides a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationships between transnational educational policies, cross-cultural adaptability, and institutional support. This study makes a valuable contribution to the field by offering practical insights into how policies, cultural competence training, and social support mechanisms collectively influence the educational experiences of Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education. The evidence indicates that policies are critical in shaping the adaptation experiences and support systems for international students. Building on these insights, the study proposes several key propositions for future research and practical application:

**Proposition 1:** Transactional educational policies have a 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 conclusion, this study examines the interplay between institutional support, cross-cultural adaptability, and transnational educational policies for Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education institutions. It explores how regulatory frameworks, cultural adaptability, and institutional support systems impact international students' educational experiences. The findings demonstrate that policies that prioritise cross-cultural awareness and cultural competence training have a direct positive influence on Northern Chinese students' ability to adapt culturally. Participants' experiences highlighted how these policies foster tolerance, inclusiveness, and cultural sensitivity, confirming a strong correlation between culturally responsive policies and improved adaptation. The study also emphasises how these policies shape interactions between students and faculty, enhancing the overall harmony of cross-cultural education. It underscores the crucial role of institutional support, illustrating how policies that favour international students can significantly improve the availability and quality of support services. The relationship between policy frameworks and institutional commitment highlights the importance of collaboration in creating an inclusive and supportive environment for international students, aligning with previous research on the impact of policies on the academic environment for foreign students. Furthermore, the study identifies cultural competence training as a key mediator between institutional support, cross-cultural adaptability, and policy. The training provided to teachers and staff plays a pivotal role in fostering academic inclusion and enhancing multicultural interactions. These initiatives make a considerable difference in the daily lives of international students, confirming and extending earlier research that advocates for the importance of cultural competence training in improving students' educational experiences. The study thus contributes valuable insights into how policies, institutional support, and cultural competence training can collectively shape the educational journeys of international students in Thai higher education, providing a clearer understanding of the mechanisms that support their success and adaptation.

### *Theoretical and Practical Implications*

This study offers significant theoretical implications, particularly in the areas of international educational policy, cross-cultural adaptability, and institutional support. It highlights the critical role that policies play in enhancing the cultural adaptation of international students, strengthening the theoretical foundations that explore policy effects on student experiences. The research moves beyond theory to examine the tangible impacts of social support and cultural competence training, directly involving both academic staff and students. This new insight bolsters theoretical frameworks that focus on the concept of policy effects, particularly in relation to student support systems. The study underscores the importance of policies that prioritise international students, enhancing the accessibility and effectiveness of institutional support services. It reveals the interconnectedness between policy and institutional commitment, illustrating how educational organisations can actively cultivate an environment that meets the diverse needs of international students. These findings contribute to theoretical frameworks that can be applied across various academic domains, especially when exploring the dynamics of support systems in international education.

For policymakers, educators, and organisations that support international students, the study provides actionable recommendations. Policymakers can use the findings to refine or develop cultural competence training policies for faculty and staff. By improving cultural awareness and adaptability among instructors, these policies can foster more inclusive educational environments. Policymakers should also consider how their policies can strengthen institutional services for international students and enhance social support networks. This research offers practical insights for educators, emphasising the importance of cultural competence training as a tool for ongoing professional development. Educators who engage in such training will be better equipped to address the unique needs of international students, creating a more inclusive, culturally sensitive learning environment. Additionally, understanding the impact of policies on social support networks will motivate educators to participate in or advocate for social integration initiatives, which are essential for fostering student connections. The study highlights the need for educational policies that consider the diverse needs of international students. It suggests that institutions should enhance their support services and develop tailored programs for Northern Chinese students in Thailand. Recognising the influence of policies on institutional support, this research encourages educational institutions to design comprehensive programs that help international students succeed and thrive in their academic and social environments.

## Limitations and Future Direction

Despite the valuable insights presented, this study acknowledges several limitations. First, the focus on Northern Chinese students in Thai higher education restricts the findings' applicability to other cultural contexts or student groups. The unique educational systems and cultural differences in other regions may result in different experiences, meaning that caution is required when generalising the results. A broader, more diverse sample would enhance the understanding of cross-cultural processes in international education. Second, the use of semi-structured interviews and self-reported data may introduce bias. Respondents might provide socially desirable answers or fail to fully explain their experiences. Although efforts were made to create a relaxed interview environment, qualitative research is inherently subjective, which could affect the conclusions. Future studies could improve reliability by incorporating both qualitative observations and quantitative measures, or by using a variety of data collection methods.

The cross-sectional design of this study also limits its ability to establish causal relationships between variables. While the mediation analyses shed light on the relationships between cross-cultural adaptability, social support, transnational educational policies, cultural competence training, and institutional support, the study's design prevents definitive causal inferences. Longitudinal research would offer a clearer understanding of how these variables interact over time, providing deeper insights into their dynamic and evolving nature. The research also did not consider the perspectives of policymakers or educators who influence global educational policies. Understanding their views could enhance our understanding of policy development, its challenges, and its goals. A multi-stakeholder approach that includes lawmakers, educators, and administrators would enrich future studies by providing a more holistic view of how policies shape the international student experience. Moreover, while the study examined academically institutionalized social support, it did not address informal social networks, which play a significant role in students' lives. Peer exchanges, unofficial networks, and community-building initiatives are key components of social support that contribute to international students' experiences. Future research could explore these informal networks to better understand the complex interplay between institutional and social support and its impact on cross-cultural adaptability.

Given these limitations, several research avenues emerge. Comparative studies across different ethnic groups and educational contexts would offer valuable insights into how transnational educational policies affect international students from diverse backgrounds. Investigating how cultural factors influence the effectiveness of these policies could reveal context-specific or universal effects. Mixed-methods research designs could also be beneficial in addressing the limitations of self-reported data. Combining qualitative and quantitative data would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the interactions between various factors. Quantitative data, in particular, could help identify patterns and trends that qualitative studies alone cannot capture. Longitudinal studies would be essential for assessing the long-term impacts of transnational education policies on institutional support and cross-cultural adaptability. This approach would allow researchers to track changes in students' experiences over time, providing insights into how their adaptation and integration evolve throughout their academic careers. Finally, future studies should adopt a multidisciplinary approach by including the perspectives of policymakers and educators. Engaging with these stakeholders would reveal their goals, challenges, and the complexities of translating policy intentions into real-world benefits for international students. Additionally, investigating community-led social support programs and informal networks would enhance our understanding of how students create their own support systems and navigate the cultural adaptation process. This would further enrich our understanding of the role of social support in international students' cross-cultural adjustment.

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