

# *Research on the Barriers and Countermeasures in Developing the International Education of Chinese Medicine*

**-Taking Anhui medicine as example**

**Xu Jingjing, Zhang Tianxin, Ge Shufan, Zhang Siyuan**

*Anhui University of Chinese Medicine, Hefei, Anhui, China*

**Keywords:** Traditional chinese medicine, International education, Anhui medicine

**Abstract:** This article explores the barriers and countermeasures of internationalization of medical education in China, taking Anhui medicine as example, by analyzing the current situation of international education in medical universities. Throughout the great-leap-forward development, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is facing a new situation and challenge, it is exceedingly necessary for researchers to explore how to build a diversified, multi-level and multiple forms of international education system of TCM to enhance international education quality and service level. Critical analysis on the basis of internationalization of medical education, recommendations and future perspective is given.

## **1. Introduction**

In keeping with the policy of Belt and Road, information regarding the value and advantages of traditional Chinese Medicine(TCM) has been generously shared and is gradually being recognized by the whole world and the international medical circle. Facing the inevitable tendency of internationalization of TCM, China has released various policies to support the international development of TCM, and China unveiled the principles, framework, and cooperation priorities and mechanisms in its Belt and Road Initiative in a bid to enhance the medical connectivity and embrace a brighter future together.

## **2. Current Situation of International Education of Tcm**

### **2.1 Traditional Education of Tcm**

In ancient China, TCM owns diverse types, including master-apprentice education, father-son education and government-established institutional education. These types are compatible with each other, and complement each other. Father-son education is a common approach in master-apprentice education. The type of master-apprentice education is focusing on combining theory with practice by following the masters in clinical practice and verbal instruction, particularly emphasizing clinical practice. [1]

Master-apprentice education, as the distinct and academic inheritance of educational model, is a significant way to cultivate TCM talents. The development of master-apprentice education plays an indispensable role in the construction of TCM talents team and the improvement of TCM academic level. In 2018, the National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine released “directives on deepening the master-apprentice education of TCM”, providing sufficient supports to realize the normalization and institutionalization of master-apprentice education in the international education of TCM.

## **2.2 Modern Higher Education of Tcm**

With the development of economy and society, TCM education cannot meet the demands of TCM personnel training. During the Republic of China, the National Government had taken some inaccurate measures to the TCM, leading the development of TCM education in a disordered situation. After the establishment of People’s Republic of China in 1949, the government put great emphasis on developing the tertiary education of TCM, many Chinese medicine universities evolve from the first batch of TCM tertiary institutions during the period of reform and opening-up, such as Anhui Tertiary Institution of Chinese Medicine.

In 1956, the Chinese Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Higher Education made unswerving efforts to carry out the establishment of four TCM tertiary institutions in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Chengdu, and they are the preliminary institutions of TCM universities, marking the TCM higher education stepped into a novel era.

Modern higher TCM education distinguish itself by combining master-apprentice education with government-established institutional education, through which the government is trying to deepen the coordination between medical and education while implement the combination of humanistic and medical education.

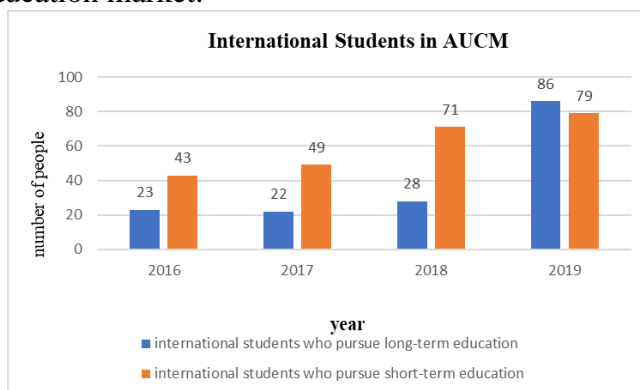
## **2.3 The Current Situation of Tcm Higher Education in Anhui**

Anhui, as the province with abundant medical resources, is renowned for South Xin’an and North Huatuo, which make great contribution to the course of TCM. The development of TCM cannot be booming without talents, and talents cannot be cultivated without TCM education. Anhui medicine comply with the polices, insisting on the principle of “going global”, to explore the distinctive model of TCM.

The medical institutions in Anhui, including universities, colleges and academies, commit to fostering high-quality innovative talents, at this stage, they provide multidisciplinary programs/majors including Chinese medicine, Chinese Material Medica, Acupuncture, Moxibustion, Tuina, Health Service Management, Medical English, and Nursing, and provides undergraduate, master and doctoral programs. It has a complete education system covering full-time, continual, distance, and external-oriented education.[2]

During the past five years, the flow of international students has become increasingly diverse in Anhui University of Chinese Medicine(AUCM). In 2017, AUCM attracted more than 87 overseas students from Malaysia, Korea, America, Singapore, etc. This increasing number of international students is expected to become an essential factor in the development of the higher education system in Anhui. From 2016 to 2020, AUCM has established solid partnerships for exchange and cooperation with 41 medical and educational institutions of more than 20 countries and districts, such as the United States, Australia, etc. Students from more than 20 countries and districts come to study in the University either for a Bachelor’s degree, or for a Master’s degree, or for clinical internship. There are over 165 international students who pursue multi-level training including undergraduate, master, doctoral education, and short-term education. As can be seen from the graph

1, under The Belt and Road, there is a steadily increasing tendency of international study in AUCM. In 2016, only 66 international students choose AUCM, however, the number of international students in 2018 reported by the university reached a record high of 165, an increase of 150% compared to 2016. Moreover, students who pursue Master's and Doctoral Degree, with a dramatic rise from 17 in 2016 to 23 in 2020, they are almost from Malaysia, US, UK, Chile, Netherlands, Pakistan, Ghana and Comoros. It is observed that ACUM is becoming an appealing destination for overseas students who intend to study TCM, and a fierce competitor of other medical universities in the international higher education market.



The 1st Affiliated Hospital (The Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine) and the 2nd Affiliated Hospital (The Hospital of Acupuncture & Tuina) have become the essential academic and cooperation exchange bases for long-term and short-term education. In May 2019, a group of 22 teachers and students from Nanyang Polytechnic University of Singapore came to AUCM to carry out a “cultural tour of traditional Chinese medicine in Anhui Province”, visiting the TCM resource center, Xin'an Medical Culture Museum, Huangshan traditional Chinese medicine base, Bozhou traditional Chinese medicine market, and Huatuo Museum. The survey found that the biggest component of international students studying in AUCM come from Pakistan, and the reason for them coming to study in AUCM is because of the policy of The Belt and Road. Meanwhile, more than ten experts and specialists go to overseas exchange and cooperation, and during the covid-19 pandemic, with the invitation of the German Confucius Institute, the Anhui provincial Chinese Medicine Association and the First Affiliated Hospital of AUCM co-hosted the Chinese Medicine Seminar on COVID-19. AUCM actively coordinated the dispatch of medical experts and made online exchange with medical experts in the U.S.

Each year, AUCM sends a large number of students to Korea, Sweden and Japan to study, undertakes clinical internship, and encourages creative transformation and development of the TCM culture in Anhui Province. In recent years, the number of international students sent by AUCM is rising steadily.

### 3. Opportunities and Challenges

#### 3.1 Lack of Systematic Education

At present, Chinese international medicine education institutions have spread all over the world. Most educational institutions are small in scale, low in level and lack of standardization. The development of TCM education in the world is unbalanced and the degree of standardization is low.[3] Most TCM training institutions only offer acupuncture courses, and only a few of them combine TCM with acupuncture teaching.

There are differences in the level of teachers, curriculum, selection of teaching materials and assessment standards, and the current TCM education lack interoperability between talent training

objectives and knowledge system. Many training institutions ignore the traditional Chinese culture education for students, and lack of training students' ability of dialectical thinking of TCM.

### **3.2 Limitations of Teaching Content**

Overseas Chinese medicine education generally focuses on clinical research but ignores theoretical education. It emphasizes disease differentiation and neglects syndrome differentiation.[4] Most of the students pay too much attention to the clinical diagnosis and treatment skills of TCM. The systematic study and mastery of TCM theory, especially the spiritual and cultural value, are not paid enough attention. In teaching, the formulation and arrangement of the plan, too much emphasis has been placed on clinical practice and the management has been weakened. At the same time, acupuncture is relatively easy to learn and has remarkable curative effect, it has been recognized by law in many countries, so TCM international education places heavy emphasis on acupuncture and moxibustion, and generally lacks comprehensive education system.

### **3.3 Evaluation and Qualification Systems Need to Be Established**

At present, the criteria of admission qualification, assessment and graduation is generally lower than the requirements of the domestic students, and there is no unified education quality management and control system. However, in the absence of education evaluation system, qualification certification system and effective quality control, the management mode and education conditions of foreign TCM education institutions are quite different, and the quality of teaching staffs and students is uneven. Therefore, the quality of TCM international education is difficult to be guaranteed. Nonetheless, the quality of education is the vitality of international education of TCM. Therefore, it is urgent to establish the standard of evaluation system, qualification system and effective quality control system of international education of TCM.

### **3.4 The Lack of Talents for International Education of Tcm**

The development of international education of TCM requires a large number of high-quality teachers with solid professional knowledge of TCM, clinical practice experience, and proficiency in foreign languages. Most of the professional teachers in Chinese medicine colleges and universities in China have received systematic Chinese medicine education and they have rich professional knowledge of Chinese medicine, but they are not qualified for teaching TCM in foreign languages. Admittedly, there are obstacles in language communication between teachers and students, especially in professional communication. As a result, foreign students who have little knowledge of Chinese medicine cannot really master the spirit of TCM.

All in all , the quality and effect of TCM education are affected by the lack of highly competent faculty, clinical practice bases, well-drafted teaching schedules and textbooks, as well as the varying quality of students.

## **4. Advice on Strategies / Countermeasures**

The challenges discussed above are not problems; they are opportunities to further promote similar levels of TCM education between China and the western countries, thereby moving towards developing an international standard for TCM education.

Owing to the growing requirements for TCM talents across the world, TCM education institutions have witnessed rapid development. A set of basic standards that are commonly used and followed in terms of teaching purposes, objectives, conditions, curriculum, teaching contents and

assessment standards should be worked out.

#### **4.1 Establish and Improve the Curriculum System and Qualification System**

The internationalisation of the curriculum is regarded as a core component of the internationalisation of TCM international education. Internationalisation of the curriculum is “a framework of values and practices oriented toward increasing awareness and appreciation of differences as the basis for the development of necessary skills and literacies for a changing world”.<sup>[5]</sup> A commitment to internationalisation of the curriculum aims towards the development of all students for the interconnected local, national and global contexts that they are living in. In internationalising the curriculum and the student experience, inclusive pedagogy, which is related to both teaching strategies and knowledge content, is considered to be a key practice. Exploring how to promote inclusivity and diversity in the internationalisation of the curriculum thus appears to be a crucial issue in the process of catering for the whole student population more effectively.

In the process of compiling TCM textbooks, the cultural differences and the coordination of teaching concept of localization with the unified international education teaching material of TCM should be fully considered to meet the needs of different regions and different levels.<sup>[3]</sup> In order to promote the internalization of TCM, efforts must be made to standardize international English TCM terminology and support must be given to publishing high standard TCM textbooks in English for the clinical TCM subjects. To ensure that students are receiving high quality teaching, incentives must be made to encourage the combination between TCM colleges in other regions all over the world and TCM universities in China.

#### **4.2 Construct a Standardized Teaching Schedule**

To equip medical students with the knowledge to operate, thrive and care for communities in the ever-globalized world, medical universities must vigilantly upgrade current curricula to reflect expert-driven recommendations for international TCM education. Based on the teaching purpose and training objectives, it is indispensable for TCM institutions to facilitate and implement professional talent training programs and teaching plans, and the credits and teaching timetable need to be formulated. Furthermore, the teaching schedule in each semester should conform to the logical characteristics of TCM, and the same time, the standard for the order of different courses and the allocation of timetable should be minimized. In addition, the cultivation approaches need to be focused, which mainly includes the strengthening of TCM thinking, the ability of clinical practice and inheritance, comprehensive quality and the characteristics of Xin'an medicine in the talent training, and finally form the distinctive cultivation mode of the combination of institutional education, father-son education and master-apprentice education.

#### **4.3 Formulate a Standardized Clinical Base of Tcm**

The TCM institutions should establish a clinical teaching base that is relatively stable and meet the requirements of clinical practice of TCM. The mechanism for the internalization of TCM is achieving the in-depth cooperation between the clinical base from China and other regions in the world. It is advisable for medical institutions to promote the cooperation with overseas medical institutions and pharmaceutical enterprises to facilitate the promotion and application of standardized products of TCM, so as to enhance the awareness of serving the health of mankind.

### **5. Conclusions**

At the time of increasing globalization of healthcare, the internationalization of TCM education can help in improving the global healthcare. And with the “Belt & Road” Initiative, TCM has made rapid development in the international market. In the early years, only the acupuncture and moxibustion services can be seen in western countries. But now, TCM industry chain, from medical service, education, and scientific research to trade and culture, has been fully transmitted to the whole world. Both Chinese and Western medicine are the science of discovering the mysteries of life from different perspectives and both have their own peculiarities. Anhui TCM need to bring its superiority into full play by exploring the spirit of Xin’an and Huatuo medicines. The best method is to unite Anhui TCM with western medicine, because Anhui TCM cannot be recognized without evidence-based medicine. Therefore, Anhui TCM should “go out” and the internalization of Anhui TCM education is the primary step. A series of policies, systems and regulations on collaborative education of teaching and scientific research have to be formulated and implemented. With the joint efforts made by all institutions concerned, future research could focus on more systematic exploration on standardization of international higher education of TCM by conducting extensive data-oriented research.

## 6. Acknowledgments

This article belongs to the research result of Key Project of Anhui Research Base of Humanities and Social Sciences “Research on Anhui Chinese medicine participates The Belt and Road international cooperation”(No. SK2019A0247)

## References

- [1] Pei Xue, Jian-Ping Liu. *Chinese Medicine and Transnational Transition during the Modern Era*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.
- [2] Yunfang Liu, Zhiping Yang, Jing Cheng , Daiming Fan(2016), *Barriers and countermeasures in developing traditional Chinese medicine in Europe*. *Frontiers of Medicine*,10(3): 360–376.
- [3] Jiang Ji-biao(2015).*Thinking of Standardization Construction of TCM International Education*. *Journal of Nanjing University of TCM(Social Science)*, 16(4):269-272.
- [4] Hans Karle, MEI Ren-lang(2008). *International Recognition of Basic Medical Education Programmes*. *Medical Education*. 42: 12–17.
- [5] Ly T. Tran. *Reforming Learning and Teaching in Asia-Pacific Universities*. Singapore: Springer, 2016.