

Reconceptualizing Support for Bilingual International Students: An Integrated Pathway Model of School Counsellor Intervention

Yunshuai Zhu*

University of British Columbia, British Columbia, Canada

**Corresponding author: Yunshuai Zhu.*

Abstract

The past few years have also seen an expansion of bilingual international students to international education systems, introducing many beneficial linguistic and cultural diversity to the education system at the same time experiencing some distinct adaptation and identity development challenges. Conventional school assistance is usually centered on deficiency neglecting the cognitive and cultural diversity of bilingual learners. This paper is based on institutional agency, linguistic capital, and the ABC model of acculturation as developed by Berry that teaches us to present an Integrated Pathway Model that illustrates the multidimensional and dynamic functions of school counsellors. The model focuses on three stages of interventions, namely, entry, adaptation, and integration, and counsellors support individuals to find emotional stability, access structural means, mediate between cultural-cognitive interpretations, and facilitate participation in the physical and digital social space. The given approach restructures bilingual students as proactive agents who can take advantage of their resources of intercultural resources to be successful with their academic performance and social inclusion. The research provides theoretical and practical implications of improving cross cultural counselling in the current education.

Keywords

bilingual international students, school counselling, acculturation, linguistic and cultural capital, cross-cultural adaptation

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the enrollment of bilingual international students in global education systems. While these students contribute valuable linguistic and cultural diversity, their experiences are often framed from a deficit perspective that emphasizes challenges rather than the opportunities they bring [1]. Current school support studies have hitherto been based on general psychological support where the special cognitive and cultural complexity related to bilingual identity is mostly overlooked. Bilingual international students not only acclimatize to new educational settings but also face numerous changes such as language processing requirements, collection of culture as well as identity rebuilding. The processes may cause cognitive overcrowding and cultural dissonance and consequently impact their emotional

well-being and school adaptation. Other aspects like language, social isolation, and change in identity contribute towards escalation of this emotional vulnerability in this duration of transition.

The existing systems of support tend to treat bilingual students as those that require some form of remedial care as opposed to owners of rich intercultural capital. This lack of plan constrains the possibilities of interventions at school. Furthermore, past studies have established the significance of social support as a factor that enhances psychological adaptation. As an example, Bender et al. demonstrated that emotional adjustment and academic performance of students have a positive correlation with perceived social support [2]. Students feel more accommodated when they have backing; they can be able to cope with stress and assimilate in new settings. Counselors, who are influential institution actors, can make students avail emotional, social, and cultural resources in the classroom context. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to discuss, with references to description of the existing sources, the way to better understand and build a theoretical model of counseling practice in terms of cross-cultural and bilingual experiences.

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Institutional Agency

According to Lareau and Lewis, institutional agency emphasizes the subjective actions of institutional actors, which shape how opportunities are distributed and circulated within organizational structures[3,4]. As opposed to a process of meritocracy or something neutral, receiving support in schools is a mediated experience. Considered in this sense, school counselors play a more nuanced role, as strategic gatekeepers of institutional capital, such as peer programs, mental health interventions, and administrative Liaisons. This aspect has a special impact on bilingual international students who are not fully acquainted with implicit institutional regulations, so their accessibility to support depends on intervention of the counselor. More importantly, such agency uses a two-fold process of cultural translation and structural advocacy. The task of counselors is two-sided, as they have the authority to determine the needs of a student in the system. They can either reproduce the stratification of societies through misinterpretation of the issues of the bilingual students or be vehicles of equity through the practical mediation between the student and the complex machinery in the institution.

2.2 Linguistic Capital and Symbolic Violence

Linguistic capital is a term used to indicate the worth attached to specific language practices in a specific social domain, the term symbolic violence is used to explain the processes of imposing and internalizing mainstream norms in subtle and often unseen ways [5]. The level of mastering the dominant language is considered to be the competence in most educational settings. This leads to the situation that bilingual international students, who are still working on their proficiency in that language could be put in the situation of being deficient, irrespective of their actual mental and academic potential. The results of this misrecognition may include marginalization, lack of engagement in classes, and social integration.

These experiences can gradually be internalized over time resulting in what can be termed as a type of silencing, in which students fail to interact and turn down expression of themselves. This is accompanied closely by emotional consequences, such as anxiousness, frustration, and lack of self-confidence. In this context, language empowerments can be achieved by the counselors to interrupt the tool of symbolic violence. Counselors can restore the sense of competence and belonging by acknowledging and making actual students bilinguals, promoting the use of multiple language sources, and redefining language differences as the advantage. By doing so, such practices do not only deal with emotional well-being but also confront the deficit-oriented discourses that are woven into the education system.

2.3 The ABC Model of Acculturation

In a bid to better understand the process of adaptation by bilingual international students, this paper relies on the conceptually depiction of the acculturation process as proposed by John W. Berry (ABC) model that portrays acculturation as a process that takes place in three interrelated dimensions: affective, behavioral, and cognitive [6]. The affective dimension (A) focuses on the emotional experiences of students, especially on the stress, anxiety, and isolation that usually accompany the taking of a flight to a new cultural and educational setting. During this phase, the counselors will offer specific emotional support services that will assist the

students in establishing coping mechanisms, managing stress, and a sense of psychological security. The behavioural dimension (B) deals with the social interaction of the students and the acquisition of culturally and contextually adequate social skills. Students are coached by the counselors on how to manage interrelationships, get involved in peer networks, and access institutional resources, and this leads to social integration as well as the appropriate use of the existing supports. Lastly, there is cognitive (C) aspect of formation of identity and self image. Through counselors, students are not only helped to reflect on their bilingual and bicultural identities, but they are able to redefine them in terms of assets, instead of weaknesses. By means of this aspect, students are taught how to combine various cultural orientations, shape a consistent identity, and develop faith in their ability to work efficiently in both linguistic and cultural settings. One of the three dimensions offers a comprehensive background of how counselors may assist bilingual foreign students in psychological, social as well as identity-related adaptation.

3. Thematic Dimensions of Counsellor Roles

3.1 Structural Mediation

Structurally, school counsellors manage important social networks of students. Based on the social capital theory, counsellors enable the shift between bonding social capital (associations within the familiar cultural or linguistic groups) and bridging social capital (connection of students into the wider host culture) [7]. In the case of bilingual international students, earlier dependence on co-ethnic networks is likely to offer them emotional protection but at the same time support social insulation by the mainstream school setting. Counsellors intervene by socializing students to different peer groups, extracurricular and institutional resources thus broadening their social networks. This is done to eliminate the so-called network isolation in a foreign setting. Through the development of bridging relationships, counsellors help students to gain access to new sources of information, support and opportunities and this is critical in ensuring that the students integrate socially in addition to succeeding in their studies.

3.2 Cultural-Cognitive Mediation

Other than structural support, the counsellors also have an important role to play in influencing the way the students perceive their experiences. They mediate meaning between the patient and the counsellor through culturally responsive counselling practices in response to cultural dissonance [8]. This is supported by culturally responsive forms of counselling which focus on the identification of cultural backgrounds, values and lived experiences of students [8]. In this paradigm, counsellors assist the students in working through the conflict with the cultures, redefining challenges, and redefining themselves. As an example, what students might have in the beginning taken to mean language deficiency could be restructured as being an average and positive phase of cross cultural adjustment. This process directly confronts deficit-based accounts, as well as addresses the internalisation of negative self-concepts. This way, counsellors help bring an end to self-doubt and emotional growth as well as identity development.

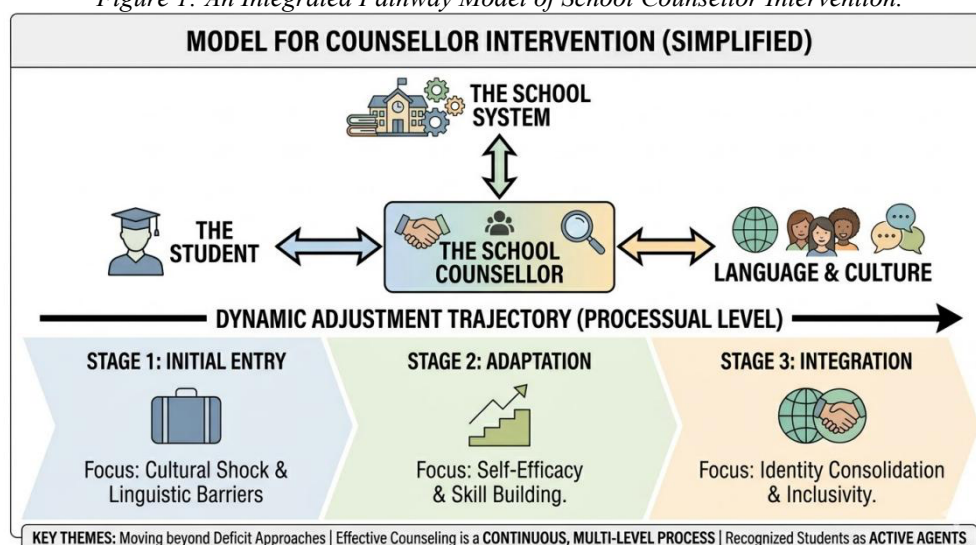
3.3 Digital Mediation

As digitalization is growing, counselling can now be expanded to include the online social sectors of the students, as well as the actual physical schooling setup. An emerging role that counsellors have had previously is guiding students in their interaction with the digital platforms, and shaping digital social capital [9]. Social media and online network communities can also be resourceful in terms of emotional control and social connectivity especially among transnational international students. Nevertheless, when over-reliance is placed on culturally homogenous Internet spaces, this may end up creating a situation that can be termed as a transnational digital enclave and restricts the ability to integrate locally. The intervention that counsellors can make an idea of is balancing the use of digital space both in developing emotional support in students and engaging in local activities, which happen in the real world. In this respect, the counselling support lines are broadened to the digital space, which will be a testimony of the evolving meaning of social interaction in digital space.

4. The Proposed Model: An Integrated Pathway of Counsellor Intervention

Continuing on the theoretical and thematic discussion above, it is this paper that suggests the work of an Integrated Pathway Model of counsellor intervention which captures the dynamic processes as well as the structural relationships which define the adjustment of the bilingual international students. The model, at the structural level, is based on the conceptualization on a four-dimensional system of interaction involving the student, language and culture, the school counsellor, and the institutional situation. In this context, the student becomes the centre of several overlapping forces, whereby, language and culture serve as both assets and limitations that determine their participation and creating an identity. This is important because the school counsellor acts as a mediating agent, through interpretation, translation and negotiation of institutional expectations and living experience between students, with the school system furnishing the wider structural context shaping access to support or not. These four dimensions are not fixed objects but they are constantly being interactively re-built.

Figure 1: An Integrated Pathway Model of School Counsellor Intervention.



The model provides a dynamic process of adjustment at the processual level that is broken down into three stages: initial entry, adaptation and integration (see figure 1). At the first stage of entry that is usually characterised by the cultural shock and emotional imbalance, counsellor interventions are aimed at emotional support and acculturative stress alleviation to create a fundamental sense of safety. During the next adaptation stage the focus changes to the designing of self-efficacy; the counsellor, when the students obtain linguistic and cultural competency, stimulate their confidence by means of academic advice and instruction in social skills, and now students are not the passive consumers but the active participants. Lastly, the integration step emphasizes on the development of a coherent bicultural identity, in which the counsellors suggest the re-organization of bilingualism as a structural resource, and uptake of reflective meaning-making. Put simply, this model highlights that successful counselling is an on-going multi-level practice that changes with the course of students as it stops being based in the deficit-based model to being able to appreciate bilingual international students as agents in the complex institutional environment in which they operate.

5. Discussion

This research brings out the multi-dimensional interaction between the linguistic, cultural, and social resources of bilingual international students, and the institutional organizations in which they are operationalized. The results highlight that it is not only the personal skills that define the adaptation and well-being of students, but also the mediation of school counsellors has an influential role in that process. As access facilitators, cultural brokers, and digital mentors, the counsellors assist the students to overcome various difficulties with the language acquisition process, cultural acclimatisation, and identity formation. These functions relate to the findings of existing studies that stress the significance of the social support in academic and emotional adjustment [2], but elaborate the body of literature by pointing out how counselling practices can proactively work towards reshaping deficit-focused views of students regarding their intercultural capital.

In addition, the Integrated Pathway Model also gives a comprehensive view of the active process of adaptation. The staged approach, which is: entry, adaptation, and integration proves that the interventions should be reactionary to the changing needs of students. As an example, the preliminary assistance based on emotional stabilisation, decreased stress levels forms a basis of subsequent interventions based on boosting self-efficacy and bicultural identity development. This view goes along with the ABC of acculturation model of Berry [6], who demonstrates that affective, behavioral, and cognitive components are interrelated and that the entire population needs to be addressed as a whole in order to adapt effectively.

The research can also be applied in terms of practical implications of school policies and counselling practice. Schools should also consider bilingual international students as custodians of important linguistic as well as cultural resources, and not as students who require to be put back on track. Counsellor education could be enhanced with the criterion of cross-cultural competence, skill to navigate an institution, and digital mediation techniques to serve students in a more effective way. In addition, the model favours the significance of promoting bonding and bridging social capital, indicating that the structured system of peer networks and culturally responsive interventions can have a great impact on the social integration of students.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the present work conceptualizes the experiences of bilingual international students by altering the outlook of the deficit-related framework towards the linguistic and cultural capital. The paper suggested an Integrated Pathway Model based on the concept of institutional agency, linguistic capital and symbolic violence, and the ABC model of acculturation, as the multifaceted and dynamic role of school counsellors. The results show that counsellors engage as not only a source of emotional care but also mediators, facilitators of the structural access, as well as facilitators of cultural-cognitive reinterpretation and facilitators of physical and digital social space participation. By using interventions at the entry, adaptation, and integration levels, counsellors will be able to minimize cultural shock and increase self-efficacy, as well as assist students to form a sense of coherent biculturality. By and large, the bilingual international students are placed as being proactive actors who can use their intercultural resources to their academic and social assimilation.

However it is mainly a conceptual study because it is not based on actual evidence but is based on the existing literature which does not allow one to substantially prove the existence of the model. The Integrated Pathway Model may be empirically proven and improved by future studies in different educational settings and research the differences in how the student backgrounds can affect the Interventions and the role of digital mediation in integration and identity formation.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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