

A Study on the Psychological Mechanisms of Communication and Pathways for Cultivating Global Competence in County-Level New Media-Empowered Cross-Border Study Tours in ASEAN

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of international education under the “Belt and Road” initiative, cross-border study tours to ASEAN countries serve as a vital practical pathway for primary and secondary schools in rural counties to cultivate students’ cross-cultural literacy. Constrained by geographical, financial, and teacher resource limitations, rural schools face challenges in regularly conducting in-person cross-border exchanges. New media platforms—such as county-level integrated media and short-form video platforms—have opened channels for bringing international educational resources to rural areas, thereby restructuring the communication system for educational development through ASEAN study tours. This paper compares service-learning in the United States, Japan’s Integrated Learning Time, overseas study tours in Singapore, and practical educational models in various ASEAN countries. Drawing on communication psychology, intercultural education, and the OECD’s Global Competence theory, and employing literature review, international comparison, and curriculum design methods, it constructs a four-dimensional analytical model of “New Media Communication — Audience Psychology — Intercultural Experience — Global Competence,” and maps out five psychological pathways: information exposure, cognitive processing, emotional experience, value identification, and behavioral participation. Taking into account the cognitive development characteristics of primary and secondary school students, the study designs a progressive, tiered study-tour curriculum that integrates labor education, science education, and revolutionary moral education, accompanied by a comprehensive, multi-level evaluation system. It also proposes implementation safeguards in terms of digital resources, curriculum development, mentor training, and cross-border cooperation. Research indicates that county-level new media serves not only as a vehicle for information dissemination but also fulfills functions of facilitating virtual cross-cultural experiences and guiding values. It can provide a theoretical framework for the internationalization of basic education in counties, China–ASEAN youth study-tour exchanges, and

the tiered cultivation of global competence among youth.

Keywords: “Belt and Road”; county-level new media; ASEAN cross-border study tours; psychological mechanisms of communication; global competence; comparative international practical education; tiered study-tour curriculum

I. Introduction

(1) The Educational Value of Cross-Border Study Tours in ASEAN in the Context of the “Belt and Road” Initiative

As cultural and educational cooperation between China and ASEAN continues to deepen, cross-border study tours are breaking down the boundaries of the classroom and fostering students’ cross-cultural communication skills and sense of regional community through contextual interaction. Given its geographical proximity to China and deep historical ties, ASEAN serves as an ideal platform for promoting international understanding in basic education. Currently, many domestic study-travel programs prioritize sightseeing over inquiry and lack a systematic framework for cross-cultural training. Developing a streamlined ASEAN study-travel model tailored to county-level schools can address the shortcomings in grassroots international understanding education and fulfill the fundamental mission of fostering virtue through education.

(2) Practical Needs for the Development of International Study Tours in County-Level Areas

Compared to urban schools, rural counties generally lack stable channels for inter-school cooperation with ASEAN countries, funding for study tours, and specialized international education faculty. While young people in rural counties also have a need to broaden their international horizons, students mostly rely on fragmented short videos to access information about ASEAN, which can easily lead to one-sided cultural stereotypes. High-quality international study tour resources continue to concentrate in urban areas, while reusable curriculum resources are scarce in rural counties. Promoting the decentralization of international educational resources is a key strategy for narrowing the urban-rural education gap and advancing the internationalization of education in rural counties.

(3) New Scenarios for County-Level New Media to Empower International Educational Travel Communication

County-level integrated media centers, campus new media platforms, and online communication tools form a multi-tiered digital communication matrix that overcomes the cost and geographical constraints of in-person study tours. In the context of ASEAN study tours, new media is no longer limited to promoting events but permeates the entire process of students’ cultural cognition and the development of cross-cultural empathy. From the perspective of communication psychology, study tour communication is a process of two-way psychological interaction between the medium and the audience. Clarifying the logic behind the formation of students’ cross-cultural cognition in the new media environment can help define the implementation pathways for cultivating global competence. At the same time, official new media platforms can integrate authoritative materials, avoid cognitive biases caused by fragmented online information, and improve the supply of international education content at the county level.

(4) Research Questions and Research Significance

This paper focuses on the context of basic education in county-level areas and examines four key issues: how new media in these areas influences students' willingness to participate in ASEAN study tours; the internal logic driving the development of global competence through a five-tiered psychological communication mechanism; a tiered curriculum design for ASEAN study tours tailored to elementary, middle, and high school students; and a supporting system to ensure the successful implementation of these study tours. Theoretically, this paper fills a gap in interdisciplinary research on new media communication and global competence; practically, the proposed model, curriculum, and support framework can provide county-level schools and educational research departments with an actionable implementation framework.

II. Review of Domestic and International Research

(1) Research on International Study Tours and Experiential Education

International educational travel differs from outbound tourism; its core value lies in the internalization of knowledge through immersive experiences. Kolb's experiential learning theory lays the foundation for the design of educational travel programs, and overseas research has consistently confirmed that multicultural experiences can enhance cultural tolerance among adolescents^[1]. Domestic research on study tours has largely focused on activity design for urban primary and secondary schools, with common issues such as vague objectives and a lack of evaluation. Most existing research on cross-border study tours in ASEAN is geared toward key urban schools, with little consideration for resource constraints at the county level. Furthermore, the majority of studies focus solely on in-person activities, neglecting the role of digital media in shaping students' prior knowledge, leaving room for further research.

(2) Research on the Development of Global Competence

The OECD, Deardorff, and Byram have developed well-established theoretical frameworks for cross-cultural competence and global competence^[2-4]. Domestic research has largely focused on educational objectives, recognizing that cross-border study tours serve as an important vehicle for fostering global competence. However, existing studies primarily sample urban students, overlooking the reality that adolescents in rural counties have limited access to foreign cultures. Furthermore, few studies have analyzed the layered psychological processes involved in the transition from information reception to the formation of global awareness. This paper introduces a communication psychology perspective to refine the explanatory logic underlying the mechanisms of global competence development^[5].

(3) Psychological Mechanisms of Communication and Research on Educational Communication

Communication psychology holds that media messages must undergo multiple levels of psychological processing before they can alter audience attitudes and behaviors. New media can bridge the psychological distance between people and foreign cultures, providing regular opportunities for online cross-cultural interaction. Current research in educational communication primarily focuses on subject-specific classrooms and ideological and political education, with relatively few studies examining the psychological pathways of cross-border study tours or multicultural communication within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Research on new media at the county level has largely centered on platform development, lacking analysis of

the mechanisms underlying the formation of cross-cultural competencies in study tour contexts, thereby revealing a significant research gap^[6].

(4) A Comparative Study of International Practical Education Systems

Service-learning programs in the United States rely on community resources to facilitate practical reflection; Japan's Integrated Learning Time encourages interdisciplinary inquiry within schools; and Singapore adopts an "online preparation + in-person field study" model to conduct overseas learning programs focused on Southeast Asia. All of these models rely on substantial funding and high-quality teaching resources, making them difficult to directly replicate in county-level areas^[7]. In ASEAN countries such as Vietnam and Thailand, field studies primarily focus on local folk culture experiences, while the development of digital cross-border exchanges lags behind^[8]. Overall, mature models from abroad are not compatible with the educational conditions in China's counties. It is necessary to distill lessons from various countries and leverage the digital advantages of county-level areas to establish a localized field study system.

(5) Research Review

Existing research has several shortcomings: First, it overlooks the long-term impact of the media communication environment on students' cognition and emotions; second, it lacks an analysis of the tiered psychological processes involved in the development of global competence; and third, practical experiences from outside the region have not been adapted to the local context at the county level. At the same time, existing research lacks an analysis of how Chinese and foreign study-travel programs align with county-level contexts; it has not yet developed a modular curriculum covering all educational stages and integrating labor education, science education, and revolutionary moral education; and the theoretical foundations for training study-travel mentors and establishing tiered evaluation systems remain relatively weak. Based on this, this paper establishes an analytical framework of "New Media Communication—Audience Psychological Mechanisms—Cross-Cultural Experiences—Development of Global Competence" to elucidate the intrinsic mechanisms by which ASEAN study-travel programs foster global competence in adolescents, and provides a comprehensive curriculum implementation pathway to support this framework.

III. Constructing a Model of the Psychological Mechanisms Underlying the Communication of County-Level New Media in Empowering Cross-Border Study Tours to ASEAN Countries

County-level new media platforms break down spatial barriers to deliver ASEAN study-tour resources, but media content cannot be directly converted into students' cross-cultural competencies; it requires a continuous, progressive process of psychological processing. This paper constructs a four-dimensional theoretical model that divides the educational communication chain into five progressive stages.

(1) Information Access Mechanism

Exposure to information is the starting point for educational outreach. Students in rural counties have limited access to ASEAN culture, so county-level integrated media platforms use lightweight content—such as short videos, text and images, and animations—to establish a basic framework of understanding. Official platforms can curate authoritative content, avoid the stereotypes perpetuated by sensationalist online information, reduce students' sense of unfamiliarity with foreign cultures, and lay the groundwork for further learning.

(2) Cognitive Processing Mechanisms

Students do not passively receive media information; rather, they engage in comparative reflection based on their own experiences. New media provides interactive tools such as online cross-national dialogue and digital databases, guiding students to analyze the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures, move beyond a single local perspective, and independently construct cross-cultural meaning—a core process in transforming media information into internalized knowledge.

(3) Mechanisms of Emotional Experience

Students' emotional attitudes determine their willingness to engage in cross-cultural exchange. Due to budget constraints, many students in rural counties find it difficult to participate in in-person study tours abroad. New media leverages lightweight activities—such as online cultural co-creation and virtual holiday exchanges—to build virtual cross-cultural scenarios, alleviate students' apprehension toward foreign cultures, and foster equal and friendly cross-cultural empathy.

(4) Value Recognition Mechanism

The educational objectives of study tours extend beyond the accumulation of cultural knowledge; they also aim to foster an awareness of diversity and inclusivity. By simultaneously sharing content via new media on the history of the Maritime Silk Road and case studies of China–ASEAN cooperation in the new era, students are guided to adopt a dialectical perspective on cultural diversity. This approach helps them strengthen their cultural confidence while respecting the indigenous cultures of ASEAN countries, thereby fostering a sense of regional community—a crucial link between cultural experiences and the development of comprehensive skills.

(5) Behavioral Participation Mechanism

After a multi-layered psychological process, students will develop a desire to participate in research-based learning and cross-border exchanges. Through activities such as joint online research projects and group discussions, they will transform their internal cognitive and emotional understanding into practical skills for communication and collaboration. New media is integrated throughout the entire process—from preparation to practice to reflection—continuously deepening cross-cultural reflection and forming a closed-loop educational cycle that moves from cognition to practice.

Summary of This Chapter

This chapter draws on multidisciplinary theories to develop a model that clarifies the internal logic by which county-level new media fosters students' global competence through a five-tier psychological chain, thereby providing a theoretical foundation for the subsequent discussion of tiered research-based courses, evaluation systems, and teacher training.

IV. Developing a Tiered Curriculum System for ASEAN-Themed Research-Based Learning from an International Comparative Perspective

Drawing on educational practices from multiple countries and taking into account the cognitive differences among elementary, middle, and high school students, we have developed a progressive ASEAN study-travel curriculum that integrates multidisciplinary content, along with corresponding

implementation models and tiered, diversified assessment schemes.

(1) Elementary School Level: Culture-Awareness-Based Curriculum

Course Objectives: Gain a basic understanding of ASEAN folklore and regional characteristics; develop a foundational awareness of cultural diversity and inclusivity; and complete preliminary learning through county-level new media platforms.

Course Modules: Understanding ASEAN Culture, Online Cultural Experiences, and Sharing Cultural Expressions.

Focus of Development: At the elementary school level, the primary focus is on fostering an interest in culture, using low-barrier experiential activities to lay the foundation for cross-cultural learning. Single-theme field study unit structure (8 class periods): 3 class periods for new media preparatory learning, 3 class periods for offline hands-on activities, and 2 class periods for project presentations. Interdisciplinary design: Art—creating ASEAN-themed crafts; Science—comparing differences in tropical ecosystems; Moral Education—learning about the history of peaceful exchanges along the Maritime Silk Road. Accompanied by online micro-cross-border activities, organizing exchanges between local elementary schools and ASEAN schools through the mutual sharing of drawings and handmade crafts.

(2) Junior High School: Cross-Cultural Experiential Courses

Course Objectives: To compare cultural differences between China and other countries and enhance students' cross-cultural communication and group inquiry skills in both online and offline settings.

Course Modules: Regional Cultural Comparison, Social Observation, Collaborative Inquiry.

Key Development Focus: Shift the educational focus from superficial perception to deep cultural understanding, and foster a cross-cultural mindset based on equal dialogue. Conduct monthly online dialogues between Chinese and foreign schools via digital platforms; integrate history and ethics to trace the history of Sino-foreign exchanges; and combine geography and biology to conduct mini-research projects on Southeast Asian ecosystems.

(3) High School Level: International Inquiry-Based Curriculum

Course Objectives: Conduct thematic research on regional issues, foster a sense of global responsibility, and develop the ability to engage in formal cross-border communication and collaborative project work.

Course Modules: Exploration of International Issues, Cross-Border Collaborative Practice, and Production of Innovative Outcomes.

Key Focus: The course focuses on cultivating advanced global competencies and honing students' ability to analyze complex regional issues. It features a half-semester joint online research project involving Chinese and international students; by integrating political science, economics, and environmental science, students will explore ASEAN cooperation and cross-border ecological issues, producing practical outcomes such as research reports and digital documentaries.

(4) Course Implementation Pathways

Establish a county-level digital resource platform for educational field trips. Integrate ASEAN cultural materials and educational field trip case studies to cover the entire process—from preparatory work and online exchanges to the presentation of outcomes—and facilitate resource sharing among schools within the county.

Develop a three-dimensional implementation model of “Experience—Inquiry—Reflection.”

Build a foundation of understanding through online and offline cultural experiences; promote in-depth inquiry through cross-national group projects; and foster reflection and growth through digital field trip journals.

A Three-Dimensional, Tiered, and Diverse Evaluation System: Moving away from single-outcome assessment, this system establishes an evaluation framework comprising “process documentation + practical performance + final outputs.” Evaluators include teachers, peers, and ASEAN exchange partners, with standards set by educational stage: at the cross-cultural understanding level, elementary school students identify differences in folk customs; middle school students objectively compare cultures; and high school students dialectically understand mutual learning among civilizations; at the communication and collaboration level, elementary school students dare to express themselves and share ideas; middle school students organize online dialogues; and high school students lead joint research projects; At the global responsibility level: elementary school students develop an awareness of friendly exchanges; middle school students focus on regional issues; and high school students produce feasible action plans. Student competency development is comprehensively assessed based on digital research journals, exchange records, and practical projects.

Summary of This Chapter

Drawing on international educational practices, this chapter establishes a progressive, integrated research-based curriculum spanning elementary, middle, and high school, accompanied by implementation procedures and a tiered assessment plan, to form a practical curriculum-based educational system tailored to the educational conditions of the county.

V. Implementation and Support Measures for Empowering Cross-Border Study Tours to ASEAN Through County-Level New Media

Based on a communication psychology model and curriculum framework, we will establish a long-term support mechanism across five key dimensions: resources, curriculum, faculty, assessment, and cross-border collaboration.

(1) Long-Term Development of Digital Resources

By leveraging county-level integrated media platforms to create specialized digital spaces for educational field trips, we will continue to consolidate standardized ASEAN educational materials, transform new media from a mere propaganda vehicle into a platform for holistic education, and promote the exchange and sharing of resources among schools within the county.

(2) Mechanism for the Routine Development of Courses

With the tiered development of global competencies as the core objective, we have established a comprehensive process consisting of “pre-trip preparation via new media—online and offline field study and practical activities—digital reflection and improvement,” thereby preventing field studies from becoming mere sightseeing trips and promoting their transformation into regular, comprehensive practical courses.

(3) Developing Cross-Cultural Competence Among Study-Tour Mentors

Study tour instructors are central to cross-cultural education and must possess knowledge of ASEAN cultures, cross-cultural communication and facilitation skills, and digital teaching competencies. Drawing on international best practices in instructor development, we have established a three-dimensional training system comprising rotational training in ASEAN cultures, hands-on

digital teaching practice, and tiered study tour curriculum design. We collaborate with universities in Southeast Asia to offer online professional development workshops and regularly organize joint teaching and research sessions between Chinese and international instructors, thereby facilitating the transition of instructors from event organizers to well-rounded educators.

(4) Implementation Mechanism for Long-Term, Multi-Dimensional Evaluation

Global competence is a long-term competency to be cultivated; its assessment covers multiple dimensions—cognitive, affective, and behavioral—and is based on a comprehensive evaluation of research and learning materials throughout the entire process. This assessment framework is forward-looking and can be continuously optimized and adjusted by schools at the county level in accordance with local educational conditions.

(5) Long-Term Educational Cooperation Between China and ASEAN

County-level education authorities will coordinate efforts to foster stable online partnerships between local primary and secondary schools and grassroots schools in ASEAN countries, regularly conducting online classes, joint research projects, and cultural exchange activities^[9]. By collaborating with schools, integrated media outlets, and educational research institutions, they will establish a collaborative framework for education, transforming short-term study tours into long-term exchange programs for Chinese and foreign youth.

VI. Conclusions and Outlook

(1) Research Conclusions

Drawing on multidisciplinary theories and comparing educational practices across multiple countries, this paper constructs a communication-psychological model for county-level new media to empower cross-border study tours in ASEAN. It clarifies the internal logic of cultivating global competence in adolescents through a five-tier psychological chain and arrives at four core conclusions: First, county-level new media is not merely a vehicle for information; it can deeply engage in the entire process of students' cognition, emotions, and value identification, thereby shaping adolescents' international perspective and sense of regional community; Second, cross-border study tours must move beyond the sightseeing model to establish a tiered curriculum system—featuring cognitive learning in elementary school, experiential learning in middle school, and inquiry-based learning in high school—while integrating labor education, science education, and revolutionary moral education; Third, the cultivation of global competence requires the synergistic collaboration of digital media, tiered curricula, professional mentors, and diverse assessment methods; Fourth, county-level new media facilitates the decentralization of international educational resources, narrows the gap in study tour resources between urban and rural areas, and promotes the balanced and internationalized development of basic education at the county level.

(2) Limitations of the Study and Future Prospects

This study employed international comparison, literature review, and curriculum design methods to construct a top-level framework comprising a theoretical model, tiered curriculum, teacher training, and an evaluation system. The research focused on macro-level, forward-looking theoretical analysis; however, it has not yet conducted field research at the county level or long-term quantitative tracking of students' global competence. Relevant empirical testing could serve as a priority for future research. Building on international comparisons and cutting-edge trends in digital field studies, future research can be expanded in multiple dimensions: selecting primary and secondary schools in counties to

implement this curriculum and conducting long-term empirical tracking of adolescents' global competence; conducting a horizontal comparison of field study systems across multiple countries to explore pathways for localizing overseas field study models; developing standardized lesson task sheets, tiered assessment scales, and exemplary teaching cases; continuously refine the practical implementation plan for ASEAN study tours that integrate labor education, science, and revolutionary moral education; conduct specialized empirical research on the cross-cultural competence of study tour mentors; and explore innovative models for digital cross-border study tours using new technologies such as VR and artificial intelligence^[10]

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