



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Examining the Mediating Role of Educators' Capacities in the Relationship between International Management and TCM Curriculum Systems

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the mediating role of educators' capacities in the relationship between international management strategies and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) curriculum systems. Utilizing a Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) approach, the research highlights how educators' skills and knowledge facilitate the adaptation and integration of global educational standards into local TCM educational practices. Findings indicate that enhanced educator capacities significantly improve curriculum outcomes by effectively implementing international management strategies. This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of curriculum internationalization in vocational education and offers practical insights for policy initiatives aimed at enhancing educational quality through global integration. Future research directions include evaluating the long-term impacts of these strategies on student success and institutional performance.

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

In the contemporary landscape of educational globalization, institutions worldwide are increasingly pressured to conform to international standards, particularly in specialized disciplines such as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Shandong Province, a central hub for TCM education in China, exemplifies the efforts to incorporate global management strategies within its vocational training curricula. This integration seeks to reconcile the universal demands of education with preserving the rich cultural and philosophical traditions inherent to TCM. International management and curriculum design are crucial aspects of education, particularly in the field of Traditional Chinese Medicine. The need for managers with international exposure and cross-cultural experience is emphasized, as it allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the intricacies involved in managing a diverse healthcare system (Elmuti, 2004).

Additionally, the idea of curriculum management is to create a balance between the needs of various stakeholders, including students, academic institutions, professional bodies, and the industry (Chikasha et al., 2020). However, traditional teaching approaches in management education have been criticized for being inadequate in the current context of increasing organizational instability (Barroso, 2023).

This study delves into the adoption of international management strategies in TCM vocational colleges in Shandong Province, with a focus on the pivotal role of educators. These individuals are not merely transmitters of knowledge but also crucial mediators who implement these global strategies while honouring the core values of TCM. The research examines how such strategies affect

the efficacy of curriculum systems through the educators' capabilities, aiming to uncover subtle shifts in curriculum adaptation driven by international norms and their impact on educational outcomes.

The theoretical framework of this study is firmly rooted in educational management, international education policy, and change management theories. This robust foundation enables a comprehensive analysis of the transformational processes that TCM educational institutions undergo in adapting to global educational trends. The research's significance lies in its potential to shape curriculum development, enhance educator training programs, and most importantly, guide policymaking in the field of vocational education.

By offering evidence-based insights into practical strategies for integrating traditional vocational studies with global educational practices, this research contributes to the broader discourse on globalization in education. The anticipated outcomes of the study are expected to deepen understanding of the mediatory role of educators and furnish strategic insights that could assist educational leaders and policymakers in effectively harmonizing international management strategies within vocational education systems.

## **2. PROBLEM STATEMENTS**

This research focuses on deciphering the intricate relationship between international management strategies and curriculum systems in vocational education for Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), with a particular emphasis on the mediating role of educators. As educational standards globalize, the capacity of educators to effectively implement these standards becomes crucial. This is particularly significant in specialized fields like TCM, where there is a need to balance traditional knowledge and contemporary educational demands.

This study examines the impact of educators' capabilities on the successful integration of international standards into the TCM curriculum, focusing on three key questions: how these management strategies affect the TCM curriculum systems in Shandong Province, the role of educators in this process, and the measurable improvements in curriculum outcomes resulting from these implementations.

These questions are designed to unravel the mechanisms through which international strategies reshape educational practices and outcomes, highlighting the crucial intermediary role of educators. This investigation is relevant not only to TCM education but also to broader discussions on educational reform and the internationalization of curricula. By examining how educators can harmonize global expectations with local educational realities, this study seeks to provide insights into capacity building within the educational sector and offer recommendations for enhancing the efficacy of international management strategies in vocational education contexts.

## **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review systematically examines the incorporation of international management strategies in educational settings, specifically within the vocational education framework for Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). The review is organized around three principal themes: the effects of international management on educational outcomes, the role of educators as intermediaries in educational transformations, and the challenges associated with integrating TCM into global curricula.

### **3.1 Impact of international management on educational outcomes**

International management strategies are crucial for aligning educational institutions with global standards and enhancing their competitiveness. These strategies typically aim to infuse international, intercultural, or global dimensions into the core functions of educational institutions, broadening their educational scope and enhancing the quality of education provided. In the context of TCM, this involves the adaptation of teaching methods and materials to ensure they not only meet international educational standards but also respect and preserve the integrity of traditional practices.

### 3.2 Mediator roles in educational transformations

Educators play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of international management strategies. They act as mediators who adapt and interpret international standards to fit local contexts, bridging the gap between global educational expectations and traditional educational practices (Siregar et al., 2019). The effectiveness of educators in these roles depends on their leadership capabilities and ability to innovate and manage change within educational settings. Interestingly, the Romanian context highlights the potential benefits of equipping educators with relevant qualifications in curriculum management, which can be instrumental in providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the complexities of international management and curriculum design (Enache et al., 2019).

### 3.3 Integrating international management and curriculum in TCM

The integration of international management and curriculum systems in the field of Traditional Chinese Medicine requires a comprehensive and strategic approach. Internationalization of the curriculum within health programs, such as TCM, involves incorporating international, intercultural, and global dimensions into the curriculum, including considerations of content, teaching methods, learning outcomes, and institutional support systems. To ensure the successful implementation of this integration, it is crucial to align the curriculum with the needs of the diverse stakeholders involved, including students, healthcare professionals, regulatory bodies, and the global TCM industry. Moreover, the challenges associated with effectively engaging in the internationalisation of the curriculum, such as individual student circumstances, staff and institutional preparedness, and geopolitical factors, must be addressed (Davey, 2023). By addressing these challenges and aligning the curriculum with international standards, TCM education can better prepare students to navigate the complexities of the global healthcare landscape and contribute to the advancement of the field.

### 3.4 Challenges of integrating TCM into global curricula

Integrating TCM into global educational frameworks presents unique challenges, primarily due to the philosophical and cultural depth inherent in TCM practices. This integration requires innovative curriculum designs that effectively translate complex TCM concepts into teaching strategies that are accessible and relevant to international students. Additionally, the integration of TCM into mainstream healthcare systems poses further challenges, as it requires the establishment of collaborative partnerships between traditional and conventional medical practitioners, as well as the development of appropriate regulatory frameworks and quality assurance mechanisms. Overcoming these challenges is essential to ensure the effective integration of TCM into global healthcare systems and educational curricula (Yang et al., 2019). The internationalisation of TCM education is a complex and multifaceted endeavor that requires a strategic approach, addressing the integration of international management practices and curriculum design, while also considering the unique cultural and philosophical aspects of TCM. Educators play a crucial role as mediators, adapting global standards to local contexts and navigating the complexities of this integration. Successful integration of TCM into global healthcare systems and educational curricula necessitates addressing the challenges associated with the internationalisation of the curriculum, such as individual student circumstances, staff and institutional preparedness, and geopolitical factors (Davey, 2023). Additionally, the establishment of collaborative partnerships between traditional and conventional medical practitioners, as well as the development of appropriate regulatory frameworks and quality assurance mechanisms, are essential to ensure the effective integration of TCM into global healthcare systems (Jing & Graham, 2020).

## 4. METHODS

The methodology employed in this analysis adopts a mixed-methods approach, which integrates both quantitative and qualitative research techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic. The quantitative component of this study involved distributing surveys to 298 educators specializing in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) within Shandong Province. The data collected from these surveys were analyzed using statistical software tools, specifically SPSS and SmartPLS.

These tools were instrumental in conducting detailed statistical analyses, enabling the exploration of relationships among various variables.

Furthermore, the qualitative aspect of this methodology consisted of conducting structured interviews with selected participants. These interviews aimed to gather deeper insights into the educators' perspectives and experiences, particularly focusing on their roles as mediators in the educational process. To strengthen the validity of the findings, the researchers also conducted a thorough review of relevant literature, examining the existing body of knowledge on the topic (Liu et al., 2020) (Tian et al., 2020) (Tian et al., 2021) (Franke, 2002).

The combination of these methods facilitated a robust examination of the data through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). SEM was utilized to assess and model the complex relationships between observed variables, providing a clearer picture of how TCM educators act as mediators and the impact of their mediation on educational outcomes. This mixed-methods approach not only enhances the reliability of the research findings but also provides a richer, more nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play within the context of TCM education in Shandong Province.

## 5. FINDINGS

The preliminary analyses of the study offered a demographic snapshot of the participants, revealing that the majority are seasoned professionals with considerable experience in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) education. This background gives them a deep understanding of the subject matter and the educational landscape in which they operate.

The findings highlighted that most educators are receptive to integrating international management strategies into their teaching and administrative practices. This openness reflects a broad readiness among the participants to align with global educational standards. Their positive reception suggests a proactive approach to adaptation and acknowledges the benefits that international perspectives can bring to TCM education. This attitude is crucial as it underpins the potential success of implementing these global strategies, fostering an environment where international norms can be effectively assimilated into local educational practices.

**Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents**

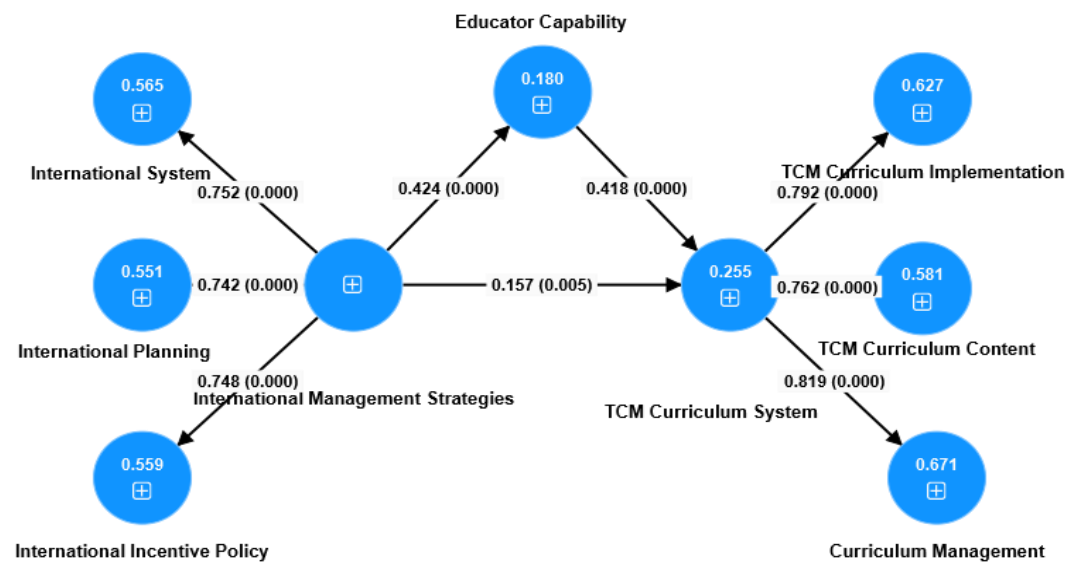
Variables		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Gender</b>	Male	159	53.4	53.4
	Female	139	46.6	100.0
<b>Age</b>	20-30	84	28.2	28.2
	31-40	101	33.9	62.1
	41-50	64	21.5	83.6
	51-60	39	13.1	96.6
	Over 60	10	3.4	100.0
<b>Department</b>	International Management Department	37	12.4	12.4
	Secondary Department	199	66.8	79.2
	Other Department	62	20.8	100.0
<b>Primary Teaching Responsibilities</b>	TCM-related courses	96	32.2	32.2
	Pharmacology-related courses	68	22.8	55.0
	Acupuncture and massage-related courses	60	20.1	75.2
	International courses	20	6.7	81.9

	Language courses	21	7.0	88.9
	Other courses	33	11.1	100.0
<b>Academic Title</b>	Teaching Assistant	65	21.8	21.8
	Lecturer	136	45.6	67.4
	Associate Professor	65	21.8	89.3
	Professor	32	10.7	100.0
<b>Workplace</b>	Shandong College of Traditional Chinese Medicine	151	50.7	50.7
	Qufu School of Traditional Chinese Medicine	147	49.3	100.0
<b>Time Spent Abroad for Study Visits or Academic Exchanges in the Last Three Years</b>	None	151	50.7	50.7
	1-6 months	94	31.5	82.2
	More than 6 months	53	17.8	100.0
	Total	298	100.0	

The demographic analysis of 298 educators specializing in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) from Shandong Province reveals a near gender balance with 53.4% male and 46.6% female participants. Most of these educators are between 31 and 40 (33.9%), indicating a predominance of mid-career professionals. Within their roles, most are affiliated with the Secondary Department (66.8%), focusing predominantly on TCM-related courses (32.2%), with significant numbers also teaching pharmacology (22.8%) and acupuncture and massage (20.1%). Academic titles among the participants are diverse, with a substantial proportion holding positions as Lecturers (45.6%), followed by Teaching Assistants and Associate Professors (21.8%). Workplace distribution is evenly split between Shandong College and Qufu School of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Half of the educators have yet to participate in international studies or academic exchanges in the past three years. However, a significant minority spent up to six months or more abroad, reflecting varied levels of international engagement within this group. This demographic profile underscores a robust and diverse faculty involved in the dynamic field of TCM education, poised to integrate global educational strategies within their local practices.

### 5.1 SEM analysis

The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis conducted in this study uncovered significant pathways linking the implementation of international management strategies to enhancements in curriculum outcomes. These connections are mediated by the capacities of educators, highlighting the pivotal role that their skills and competencies play in the process. The SEM model clearly demonstrated a strong positive effect of international management strategies on the educators' abilities to adapt and innovate within their teaching practices. This adaptive capability is crucial, as it enables educators to effectively incorporate international standards and approaches into their curriculum design and delivery. In turn, this flexibility and innovation in teaching practices significantly enhanced the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum. The SEM findings also revealed that the educators' capacities as mediators were a critical factor in strengthening the relationship between international management strategies and curriculum outcomes. This underscores the importance of empowering educators with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to navigate the complexities of integrating global standards into local educational contexts. The results indicate that improvements in curriculum outcomes are not merely due to the adoption of international standards but are significantly influenced by how well educators can integrate these new approaches into their existing practices, thus enriching the educational experience and outcomes for students.



**Figure 1: SEM analysis on the relationships between international management strategies and the traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) curriculum system**

Figure 1 illustrate the SEM path coefficient analysis provided valuable insights into the role of educators' capacities as mediators in the relationship between the implementation of international management strategies and the effectiveness of the TCM curriculum system. The analysis highlighted that educators' capacities significantly influence the successful integration and adaptation of these strategies within the educational framework. Specifically, constructs related to educator capability (EC) and knowledge demonstrated strong direct impacts on the adaptability and implementation of TCM curriculum system changes (0.418,  $p=0.000$ ). This mediation is evidenced by significant path coefficients, such as the robust positive relationship between international management strategies (IMS) and educator capability (0.424,  $p = 0.000$ ) and the subsequent influence of international management strategies on TCM curriculum system (TCS) (0.157,  $p = 0.000$ ). The overall configuration of the model demonstrates the complex and significant role that educators' skills play in integrating and applying international educational standards within the TCM curriculum context.

Furthermore, the analysis underscored the critical nature of developing and enhancing educators' capacities to foster an educational environment that is responsive to international educational standards. The path coefficients suggest that improvements in educators' abilities to engage with and apply international management strategies directly enhance the curriculum's quality and relevance. For instance, the paths from EC to IMS (0.424,  $p = 0.000$ ) and EC to TCS (0.418,  $p = 0.000$ ) indicate that educators' capacities not only support the direct application of these strategies but also contribute significantly to the overall curriculum effectiveness. This SEM model illustrates how empowered and capable educators are pivotal in bridging the gap between global educational innovations and localized TCM educational practices, thereby enhancing the educational outcomes for students within this specialized field.

## 6. DISCUSSION

The results underscore the critical role of educators in mediating the effects of international management strategies on curriculum systems. This discussion evaluates the implications of these findings, exploring the potential for educators to enhance the effectiveness of curriculum internationalization. The analysis also examines the cultural, institutional, and policy-related factors that influence the successful integration of these strategies into educational practices. One of the key insights gleaned from this study is the importance of empowering educators as agents of change in the internationalization of TCM education. While the findings suggest that equipping educators with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to adapt international management approaches is crucial, this view does not account for the potential challenges and drawbacks of such an approach (Caldwell et al., 2018).

Integrating global standards into local curriculum design and delivery may risk undermining the unique cultural and traditional aspects of Traditional Chinese Medicine education. Educators may face difficulties in balancing international standards with the preservation of domestic educational practices and values. A more nuanced approach that carefully considers the local context and empowers educators as guardians of cultural heritage may be necessary to achieve a meaningful and sustainable integration of international management strategies. (Abdallah & Alkaabi, 2023). Furthermore, the results highlight the need for comprehensive institutional and policy support to facilitate the successful implementation of internationalization efforts.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This research underscores the crucial role of educators' capabilities in mediating the impact of international management strategies on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) curriculum systems. By detailing the mechanisms through which international standards are integrated into vocational education, the study contributes significantly to educational theory. It provides practical insights into how educators can effectively blend traditional knowledge with global educational practices, thereby enhancing the quality and relevance of TCM education (Wang et al., 2019). This integration promotes curriculum internationalisation and facilitates the synthesis of global and local educational elements, which is vital for the progressive development of TCM educational practices. (Xiaoxuan & Hu, 2023)

The study advances educational theory by offering empirical evidence regarding the mediator role of educators in the context of curriculum internationalisation, particularly within specialised vocational fields like TCM. It enriches understanding of how international management strategies can enhance educational outcomes, providing a foundation for future research and policy initiatives. Recommendations for future work include examining the long-term effects of these strategies on student outcomes and institutional performance and developing policies that bolster educator competencies to align with international standards. The broader implications of this research highlight the significant improvements in educational outcomes that can be achieved through enhanced educator capacities, ensuring that the curriculum meets global standards and effectively integrates and respects traditional knowledge, thereby enriching the educational experience for students from diverse cultural backgrounds. This comprehensive exploration emphasises the critical role of educators as mediators in adapting educational systems to a globalised context, which is pivotal for the sustained relevance and advancement of TCM education.

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