

Analysis of the staged changes in Occupational Identity Psychology of Flight Attendant Majors

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Abstract. Before entering university, flight attendant students, like the general public, have a shallow understanding of flight attendants' work, consequently cultivating a vague professional identity. After becoming flight attendant students, their career identity psychology will undergo potential staged changes along with their experience accumulation before and after the internship, thus forming a potential career identity psychology. This article analyzes the characteristics of these changes and proposes suggestions for perceptual education, role model education, and goal education in order to help students ultimately form a stable and actual psychological identities, with the purpose of achieving consistency between vocational education and student career choices.

1. Introduction

The concept of "Identity", raised by Freud, means a process of emotional and psychological convergence between people and others, groups or imitation characters^[1], which is an individual subjective psychological phenomenon based on cognition, recognition and acceptance of the cognition, emotion and behavior of objective objects, and also a dynamic concept that constantly changes over time, environment, and personal experience.

Occupational identity refers to the state in which an individual gradually develops and stabilizes the profession he or she is engaged in cognitively and emotionally and gives a positive evaluation. Occupational identity includes both actual and potential occupational identities^[2]. The potential identity refers to the positive evaluation of the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral instability of the occupation that may change within the individuals' entities. Actual professional identity is an affirmative evaluation of the occupation that the individual has formed based on his cognitive, emotional, and behavioral stability. Since the college stage is a period of self-identity formation, this article mainly analyzes the formation process and phenomenon of potential professional occupational identity.

Flight attendant majors have their clear career orientation. As a vocational education, flight attendant majors have already clarified identities towards their future career category and initially established a preliminary career cognition at the beginning of being admitted to the major compared with students majoring in other majors. As we know, this professional cognition is limited to the general public's superficial perception of flight attendants. The public's impression of flight

attendants is affected by the "halo effect", so there is a general cognitive bias towards flight attendants, namely, beautiful and fashionable. With the transition of two different stages, school study and life and their later on-the-job internship, a fluctuation towards professional identity will be liable to emerge among flight attendant majors.

Therefore, this article tends to analyze the phased changes in career identity psychology of students before and after their on-the-job internships, and proposes suggestions to better promote the transformation process of potential career identity of flight attendant majors into actual career identity. This is of great significance not only for building a platform for the supply and demand of flight attendant talents, but for constructing a good mechanism for the supply and demand of flight attendant talents, leading to alleviating the supply-demand contradiction of flight attendant talents in China.

2. Potential Professional Identity Psychology before the Internship

The professional identity before on-the-job internship actually includes the stage before entering university and the learning stage after entering university. Four stages of psychological changes among flight attendant students are involved at this stage, namely, the stage of vision and anticipation, the stage of joy and novelty, the stage of anxiety and confusion, and the stage of chagrin and confidence respectively.

2.1 The Stage of Vision and Anticipation

When flight attendant majors have not yet entered university, their professional perception at this stage is

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consistent with the general public's understanding of flight attendants, which is merely superficial. Their understanding is filled with subjective imagination featured with idealization rather than actual understanding. When the interview is passed, there emerges a general expectation towards future school life and the anticipated psychology towards the ideal state of the future career.

2.2 The Stage of Joy and Novelty

At the beginning of entering the college, with beautiful expectations and aspirations, the personal imagination embraced by freshmen majoring in flight attendant made a direct contact with reality. They feel that the major differs from other majors in terms of school environment, student management, etiquette and clothing, course difficulty and so on, while immersing themselves in the joy of becoming one of them^[3]. This is the most prominent psychological change during this period^[4]. This period was relatively brief, and with the end of preliminary courses such as orientation programs and military training, their joy and novelty gradually diminished. Due to the fact that these freshmen are short of qualities and capabilities essential for flight attendants at the beginning, they inevitably need to receive training in absorbing relevant knowledge, skills, and capabilities. At the same time, the job of flight attendant pays much attention to safety issues, and the training received by these freshmen is inevitably rigorous and may be simple and repetitive, resulting in a change in professional identity in their mentality.

2.3 The Stage of Anxiety and Hesitation

Due to the nature of civil aviation work and the demands by airlines, it is necessary to cultivate and train flight attendants with the purpose of possessing a good image. Good manners are the most direct way to express an individual's good image, and so images of flight attendants also represents the corporate image of airlines. Flight attendants are required to be capable of possessing fluent language expression, good temperament presentation, and friendly personality.^[5] However, more children of nowadays possess such characters: poor performance under pressure, insufficient hard-working abilities, lack of interpersonal skills and so on. Under the pressure of acquiring various knowledge and skills, flight attendant students tend to be more anxious and hesitant, especially today's main assessment criterion emphasize an individual's external image, which easily leads to the phenomenon of "wanting to lie flat" among flight attendant students.

2.4 The Stage of Chagrin and Confidence

As the learning phase comes to an end, interviews before starting their internship become particularly important. Before the interview, flight attendant majors are eager to be recognized and strive to approach their striving goals. However, due to differences in professional knowledge and skill-learning stages comparing with other majors, successful and failed interviews inevitably lead to two

different mental states: frustrated state of mind caused by insufficient effort and failure to pass the interview, and more confidence state of mind due to successful passing the interview.

3.Potential Occupational Identity Psychology after Internship

The internship stage, also known as the training stage or the stage of being-a-member of airlines, is a particularly important adjustment stage. From the beginning of the internship to the end, flight attendant interns will be confronted with cognitive dissonance caused by differences between high expectations and actual work, thus resulting in conflicting mentalities. One of the reasons for such cognitive dissonance is because interns perceive the current state of professional hardship through their own work experience, as well as the differences between themselves and flight attendants. On the other hand, there is a conflict between hard work and the desire to integrate themselves into the group of flight attendants. Due to embracing years of career dreams and possessing basic norms and requirements of airlines for careers, flight attendant majors will be in a stage of rational regression stage, and their cognition for the job will present changes and have a new career orientation.

As a result, such a cognitive dissonance will lead to a decrease in professional identity, but endogenous motivation will be born after adjustment for cognitive dissonance. Such a mental changing process is an aid to help them strive to improve themselves and enhance their professional identities towards their future profession of being flight attendants.

4.The Realistic Career Identity Psychology of Flight Attendant Graduates

For flight attendant graduates, the stage of after-graduation and formal employment is the beginning and positioning stages of their career. After experiencing their studying in school and interning periods, flight attendant majors have achieved their cognitive unity or changed their formal cognition. If students establish their professional identities, they will actively engage in the future work and strive to achieve their career ideals; while for those who have not established their professional identities of being qualified flight attendants, they will consequently give up their original desired profession and choose other jobs instead.

Flight attendant graduates who give up their employment opportunities of being flight attendants after graduation will cause certain losses to themselves and their families as well. On the one hand, after three or four years of major studying, the knowledge acquired, however, needs to be transformed to or connected with the skills required for other professions within a short period to meet the needs of other jobs. A lot of time and energy need to be invested; On the other hand, delayed employment can increase the economic burden on families and individuals,

causing anxiety and negative impacts on family and social harmony.

Therefore, in educating flight attendant majors, efforts should be made to minimize the proportion of students who give up their original professional plan and also help them to enhance their professional identities. The author proposes suggestions concerning their perception education, role model education, and goal education that more students form a stable actual psychological identity, and ultimately achieve the consistency between vocational education and student career choices.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Perceptual Education

Based on the changes in their career identity psychology before and after internships, the author believes that in the early stages of being admitted to the major, namely their joyful and novel mental stage, schools need to train them with perception education on career identity. On the one hand, the head of the flight attendant major elaborates the training objectives and curriculum system to all flight attendant students, enabling them to have a preliminary understanding of the school's curriculum requirements, management methods, and learning, thus helping them build their psychological expectations for the future.

On the other hand, peer counselors introduce their experiences to them, helping them gain a deeper understanding of their profession from a perspective of peer counselors. Such a way enables them to be aware of potential difficulties they may face in the future and then to engage in psychological development beforehand.

At the same time, by organizing students to watch excellent film and television works related to crew work, such as "Chinese Captain" and "Ordinary Hero", students can have an immersive experience of such flight attendant work. They can have the first hand experience of ordinariness and greatness of flight attendants in their work, clarify such a fact that flight attendant work does not perform a single service function, but carries the important responsibilities ensuring the safety of passengers, crew members, and aircraft throughout the entire flight process. Students' understanding of cabin crew work has risen from simple understanding of such a job to their initiative awareness of their own responsibilities and missions, thereby enhancing their willingness to continuously improve themselves.

In addition, with the advancement of the teaching plan, students will have the study of more professional courses, such as Etiquette, Cabin Service, Communication Skills and so on. These courses take the perspective of the specific work of flight attendants in the cabin, including theoretical explanations, case analyses, simulation practice and other teaching activities. Through the study of these courses, students can greatly improve their abilities in emotional control, personality development, stress management, interpersonal communication, and consequently enhance their professional identities.

5.2 Role Model Education

The particularity of the role of flight attendants determines the ability requirements for flight attendant majors. Flight attendants must possess good physical qualification to adapt themselves to adverse factors such as high-altitude flight and cabin low pressure. The service groups by flight attendants are individuals with different social identities, so it is required that flight attendants should have high interpersonal communicative capabilities. At the same time, there are more requirements for aviation professional knowledge reserves and humanistic knowledge than other service industries. The abilities such as a quick reaction, attention allocating and shifting, and pressure and failure resistance are also essential qualifications that flight attendants are acquired to possess.

At this point, in response to the anxiety and confusion of flight attendant majors, the crew group can be used as a reference to strengthen the cultivation of students' abilities. Excellent elderly students can be invited to guide students to face difficulties and challenges, strive to improve themselves, thereby forming a stable professional identity with their excellent practical cases.

Graduates who have just graduated and are engaged in flight attendant can provide timely and targeted guidance based on their own experience, as they are similar in age to students majoring in flight attendant and have just recently experienced this period of study and life; And flight attendants who have worked for many years have become the backbone of airlines, such as pursers, chief flight attendants. They, from the perspective of career planning, can help students establish and clarify their life plans and career prospects, and thus intrigue endogenous motivation in their mental world to overcome current discomforts and difficulties. There will be a need to easily cope with their professional identities featuring the fluctuating changes.

5.3 Target Education

The training goal of vocational education is to cultivate practical talents. The training goal of the flight attendant majors is to meet the demands of airlines, especially meeting the needs of targeted airlines. Also, this is a good solution to interview failure and cognitive dissonance after internship.

Firstly, universities adhere to the guidance of training objectives, enhance students' professional qualities and core competitiveness in the related industry, and make them outstanding talents among graduates in this field. Such an education will naturally promote the transformation of students' potential career identities into practical career identities. Universities need to adhere to the principles of "meeting the needs of professional positions, highlighting practical ability cultivation, and valuing characteristic courses", follow the guiding ideology of "strengthening humanistic literacy, consolidating theoretical foundations, and highlighting professional abilities". Guided by "necessary and sufficient" planning guideline, a course system of "1+X"^[6] has been formed in order to match the competency model of flight attendant profession. In addition, it closely

adheres to the professional quality requirements of airlines set for crew members, and runs the "job competency" model throughout the entire teaching reform process, highlighting the importance of political quality, humanistic quality, and professional quality in talent cultivation. Graduates should be trained to become excellent talents with characteristics of solid professional knowledge, strong hands-on ability, quick learning, good teamwork ability, high comprehensive quality, strong professional identity and sense of responsibility.

Secondly, universities and airlines actively cooperate with each other to cultivate students to meet the demands set by airlines to satisfy their corporate culture, management models, and skill requirements through joint training. These students cultivated in such a way can better integrate themselves into the airlines during their internship period. With ease, they will be able to quickly transform potential career identities into real career identities. Before students' entering school or in the early stages of their school studies, airlines and students explore to first determine the joint training intentions, and then working together to provide "order based" training model. On the one hand, the school creates an atmosphere of joint training in schools, such as students attending classes in classrooms designing company elements, decorating their own makeup guided by airlines' professional image requirements, and creating their own English announcements according to airlines' cabin service standards.

On the other hand, the school actively communicates and coordinates with the airline training departments, and both parties arrange regular courses given by full-time and part-time^[7] instructors from the airline to elaborate enterprise history, management models, and specific training courses. In this way, students enhance their identities and can adapt to airline requirements in advance and in a more active manner. The training can also shorten the adaptation period of the internship stage and better integrate themselves into the airline and on-the-job internship work. Ultimately, students reduce occurrence of phenomena of cognitive dissonance after internships, thus achieving the effect of transforming potential career identities into actual career identities.

The author only explores the changing characteristics of professional identities among flight attendants majors at different stages from the perspective of self-identity, and puts forward recommendations for perception education, role model education, and goal education. Other identity^[8], value identity, and many other aspects are also important ones that contribute to students' actual career identities. Of course, such research still needs to be further cultivated and explored.

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