Problems and Strategies of Cross-cultural Adaptation of Chinese Teachers in Nigeria

Fuya Zhang

Suzhou University, Suzhou, Jiangsu, 215123, China

Abstract

In the context of the "Belt and Road" initiative, Nigeria's "Chinese fever" continues to heat up. The team of Chinese language teachers in Nigeria has become the main force in local Chinese teaching. Faced with huge differences in life and cultural distance, the process of cross-cultural adaptation faces many challenges. Through questionnaires and interviews, this paper examines the current situation of cross-cultural adaptation from the two dimensions of psychological adaptation and socio-cultural adaptation, analyzes the specific difficulties it faces, and analyzes the four aspects of objective adaptation needs, subjective adaptation needs, individual adaptation capabilities and external assistance. The main issues of cross-cultural adaptation are studied in various aspects, and finally the countermeasures are proposed.

Keywords

Chinese teacher; Cross-cultural adaptation; Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Nigeria is one of the most developed countries in Africa. With the rapid development of Chinese language internationalization in recent years, the number of people learning Chinese in Nigeria has been increasing, the demand for Chinese language teachers has increased, and the team of Chinese language teachers in Nigeria has been growing. In the face of hugely different foreign cultures, can they successfully achieve cross-cultural adaptation? The author was one of the Chinese teachers who went to Nigeria and experienced many difficulties in cross-cultural adaptation in Nigeria. Paying attention to the dilemma of intercultural adaptation of Chinese teachers in Nigeria and analyzing which strategies can help them speed up the process of intercultural adaptation is undoubtedly an important topic in the promotion of Chinese in Nigeria.

2. The Concept of Cross-cultural Adaptation and Its Influencing Factors

2.1. Concept

The concept of cross-cultural adaptation was first proposed by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936). It refers to the adaptation of social members from different cultural backgrounds to a new culture after entering an unfamiliar cultural environment. Regarding the classification of cross-cultural adaptation, most researchers agree with the view of Ward and colleagues (1992), who divide cross-cultural adaptation into two dimensions: psychological adaptation and social cultural adaptation. Psychological adaptation refers to psychological and emotional stability and satisfaction, involving affective, behavioral, and cognitive changes. In the process of cross-cultural contact, if there is no or less depression, Anxiety, loneliness, disappointment, homesickness and other negative emotions, even if they reach psychological adjustment. Socio-cultural adaptation refers to the ability to adapt to the local social and cultural environment and whether it can effectively interact with people from the local culture. Psychological

adaptation is often evaluated based on mental health status, while socio-cultural adaptation is often evaluated based on the difficulties encountered in daily life in the host country.

2.2. Influencing Factors

Chen Hui and Che Hongsheng (2003) summarize the factors that affect the cultural adaptation of Chinese expatriate teachers as external factors and internal factors. External factors include life changes, social support, the influence of time on psychological adaptation, cultural distance, discrimination, and prejudice; internal factors; Factors include evaluation and coping styles, personality factors, knowledge and skills, coping strategies and demographic factors. Chen Weichun (2009) pointed out that some scholars explain the influencing factors that affect cross-cultural adaptation from both the macro and micro aspects. The macro factors are mainly the cultural and social factors of the host country; the micro factors include personal characteristics, such as personality characteristics (including sensitivity and open mind). Degree, flexibility, and confidence), the purpose of overseas work, understanding of the country where you are located, experience in cross-cultural training, language skills, and demographic variables such as age, gender, marital status, country of origin, etc. Sun Qin and Li Yan (2012) adopted Danckwortt's point of view to discuss the influencing factors of cross-cultural adaptation from four aspects. One is the objective coercion of adaptation, that is, the adaptation requirements of the objective environment for expatriate teachers; the second is expatriate teachers. The subjective need for cultural adaptation; the third is the individual's adaptability and quality; the fourth is the help provided by outside teachers to adapt to foreign teachers. Although these related studies have different perspectives on the factors affecting cross-cultural adaptation, the factors discussed are generally the same.

3. Current Status of Cross-cultural Adaptation of Chinese Teachers in Nigeria

3.1. Survey on the Degree of Cross-cultural Adaptation

We conducted a questionnaire survey on the degree of cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese teachers in Nigeria. The questionnaires were mainly based on the self-evaluation depression scale published by Zung in 1965 and the sociocultural adaptive scale published by Ward & Kennedy in 1999. The questionnaires were slightly adjusted according to the specific conditions of Nigeria and were distributed. There were 35 questionnaires and 31 were returned.

The survey results show that in terms of psychological adaptation (see Figure 1), according to the depression index measurement standard, about 84% of teachers have depressive symptoms, of which about 58% of teachers are mildly depressed, and about 23% of teachers are moderately depressed, About 3% of teachers even reach a severe degree of depression.

In terms of social and cultural adaptation (see Figure 2), according to the measurement standard of the coefficient of difficulty of adaptation, 97% of Chinese teachers report that the process of cross-cultural adaptation is difficult. Among them, 32% of teachers feel that it is not too difficult, and 52% of teachers feel that it is relatively difficult. 10% of teachers find it difficult, and 3% of teachers find it particularly difficult.
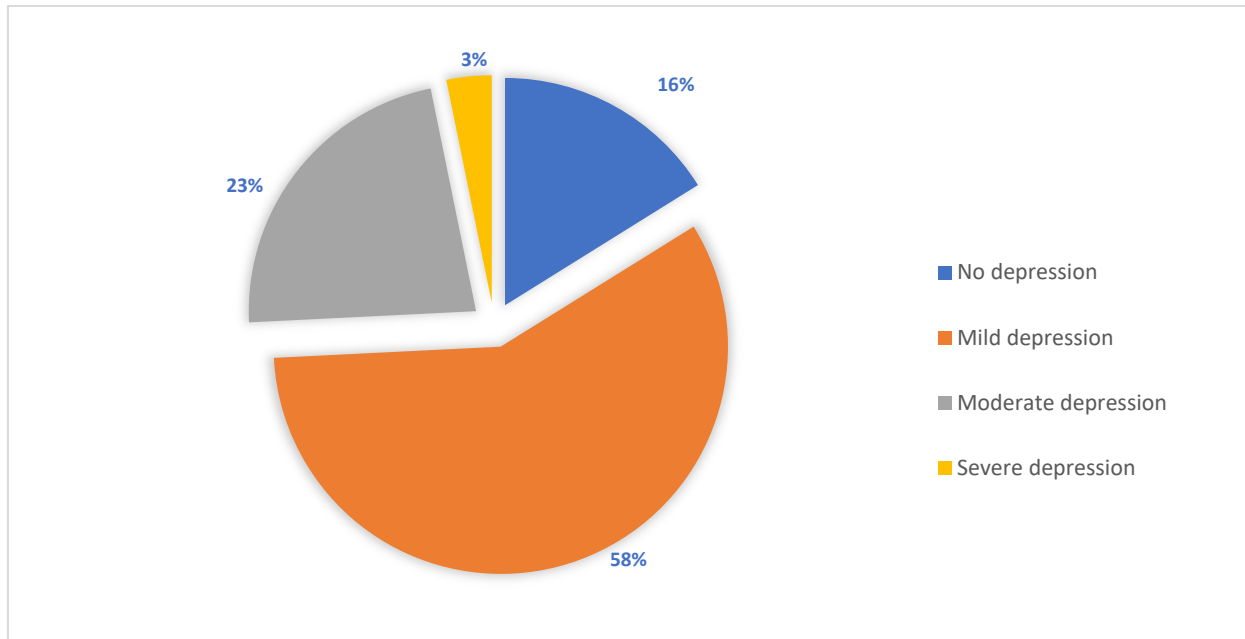
Figure 1. Psychological adaptation degree of Chinese teachers in Nigeria
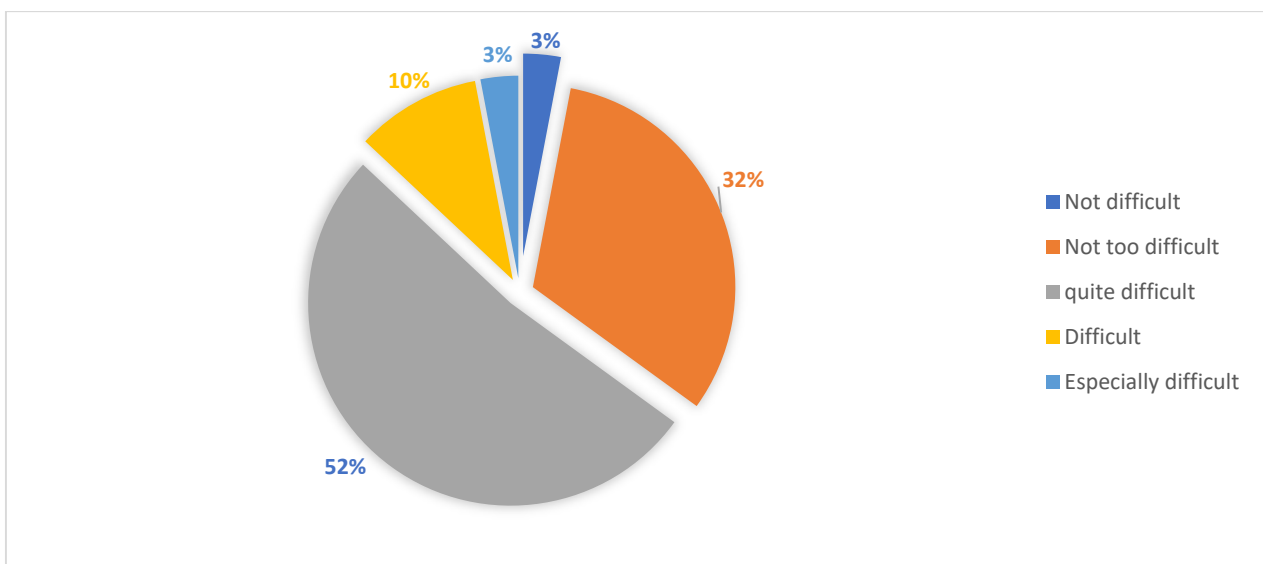

Figure 2. The degree of social and cultural adaptation of Chinese teachers in Nigeria

It can be seen that the current Chinese teachers in Nigeria generally have psychological problems in the process of cross-cultural adaptation. Most teachers are not satisfied with the social and cultural conditions of Nigeria, and it is difficult to adapt.

3.2. Investigation of Difficulties in Cross-cultural Adaptation

In response to specific adaptation difficulties, we conducted an interview survey with 18 teachers. The interviews were conducted on the basis of the Social and Cultural Adaptation Scale, and the topics involved life foundation, social interactions, values and other aspects. The survey results show that the content with greater difficulty in adapting is mainly concentrated in the basics of life and values; the less difficult is mainly in social interaction. The main difficulties are as follows:

1. Basic life category: First, the problem of power outages and water outages. Almost every day, there are long-term power outages, which seriously affects normal life and work; second, traffic is inconvenient. First, the vehicles are in poor condition, mostly scarred, incomplete and old.

Secondly, the road conditions and the operation of the traffic system are also chaotic. For safety reasons, most teachers do not leave their homes except for classes and occasional grocery shopping. Third, they are not adapted to the local area. There is a shortage of food and ingredients. Most of the teachers cook their own meals, but due to travel restrictions, they can only purchase food once or twice a month. However, the hot climate and frequent power outages make it difficult to store food, resulting in a shortage of food materials. Fourth, social security is worrying, and within Nigeria Boko Haram, a terrorist organization loyal to ISIS, has repeatedly created threats of terrorist attacks, and robbery and kidnapping shootings have occurred from time to time. During the investigation, a teacher said that he had personally experienced a shooting.

2. Values: Firstly, Nigerians have a relatively free and arbitrary time concept, and they have a high tolerance for being late and changing time schedules at will; secondly, most teachers say they are not comfortable with the widespread request behavior, colleagues and friends , Neighbors, and even strangers will ask for items from themselves for no reason. In addition, there are frequent strikes among Nigerian students. The demonstrations on campus sometimes get out of control and even lead to violent conflicts. In the investigation, some teachers reported that they had been driven out of the classroom by the students who were marching during class, and the students blocked the school gate and injured people by smashing cars. This led to the clearance and closure of schools, etc. This situation seriously affected the teaching order and caused panic among Chinese teachers.

3. Social interaction: First, Nigerians are more intimate in social distance and have more physical contact. People of the opposite sex often greet their shoulders or hug them when they meet; the second is Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country with Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo Ethnic groups are the three main ethnic groups in Nigeria. Although English is the official language, their own ethnic languages are often used in daily communication. Language barriers restrict the interpersonal communication of Chinese teachers, and each ethnic group has different customs and taboos. Social interactions need to be particularly cautious; The third is that Nigerians exude enthusiasm. Many locals will be very excited when they see young Chinese teachers, such as whistling, shouting, and even stepping forward to talk, which makes some Chinese teachers feel uncomfortable.

4. The Main Problems of Cross-cultural Adaptation of Chinese Teachers in Nigeria

This article uses Danckwortt's summary of factors that affect cross-cultural adaptation to analyze the cross-cultural adaptation of Nigerian Chinese teachers from the perspective of objective adaptation requirements, subjective adaptation needs, individual adaptability and external assistance.

1. The objective adaptation pressure is greater. There is a huge cultural distance and life difference between Nigeria and China. Nigeria is located in Africa, and it is very different from China in terms of natural environment, social customs, and people's values and behaviors. Nigeria is also one of the most impoverished countries in the world, with imperfect infrastructure, difficult transportation, poor social security, and backward medical and health conditions. These objective requirements for cross-cultural adaptation undoubtedly pose a problem for Chinese teachers.

2. Insufficient subjective adaptation needs. "Passenger" mentality and cultural exclusion have caused some Chinese teachers to subjectively and passively deal with the problem of cross-cultural adaptation. On the one hand, the tenure of Chinese teachers in Nigeria is generally one to three years, which makes some people have a "passenger" mentality. Even if there is a problem in cross-cultural adaptation, they do not actively seek solutions, but look forward to

the end of the term. "One go to relieve one thousand sorrows." On the other hand, some Chinese teachers lack a sense of identity with Nigerian culture, subjectively do not want to understand and adapt, or even repel, psychologically they refuse to "go to the countryside and do as the customs".

 3. There are differences in individual adaptability. Objective and complex adaptation difficulties put forward various requirements on the adaptability of Chinese teachers, and each individual faces different challenges. For example, there are very few places such as shopping malls and parks for leisure in the local area, and the poor traffic and public security conditions also restrict the travel of Chinese teachers. They can only become "homeboys and homegirls", while Chinese teachers who are keen on outdoor activities have difficulty. Adapt to this kind of life. In addition, Nigerians accept physical contact such as shoulders, hugs, and talk about topics in normal social interactions, and some Chinese teachers have always been unable to accept such intimate social distance.

4. External assistance is limited. One is the lack of channels to obtain information about Nigeria. The survey found that most Chinese teachers did not have a comprehensive and adequate understanding of Nigerian society and culture before taking up their posts, nor were they prepared for materials and psychological preparations. They mainly obtained information through Internet search, but the introduction of Nigerian society and culture on the Internet was very limited. The second is the lack of connections with local Chinese. Being in remote Africa, getting to know local Chinese is an important way for Chinese teachers to overcome anxiety and familiarize themselves with local life, but the opportunities for Chinese teachers to get in touch with local Chinese are very limited.

5. Coping Strategies for Cross-cultural Adaptation of Chinese Teachers in Nigeria

5.1. First of All, When Encountering Problems in the Process of Cross-Cultural Adaptation, Chinese Teachers Who Go to Nigeria Need to Improve Their Adaptability and Enthusiasm.

1. Actively respond and give up the "passenger" mentality

Cultural maladaptation will not only affect all aspects of current life and work, but also have a profound impact on the body and mind. We must not "break the jar", but must actively seek solutions to problems, and the process of solving problems is also The process of improving one's abilities. Maintaining a positive attitude is the first step to solve the problem of cross-cultural adaptation. Sun Jin (2010) pointed out that self-efficacy plays an important role in the process of cross-cultural adaptation. Belief in work or task, it is not about the skill itself, but the degree of self-confidence in whether you can use the skills you have to complete the work behavior." Therefore, we should maintain a positive attitude and actively play the role of self-efficacy in cross-cultural adaptation.

2. Empathy and understand cultural differences

Adapting to another culture is like making a new friend. There will be collisions of ideas and differences of opinion, but the important thing is respect and understanding. Faced with different cultures, especially those cultural customs that run counter to the values we have always upheld, don't rush to deny and reject them. You might as well understand the causes and consequences of these cultures with respect. Every nation has a unique culture, and China will also have some cultural customs that are not recognized by others. We also look forward to the respect and understanding of others. Therefore, empathy, respect and understanding of cultural differences can effectively help us accept new cultures and seek common ground while reserving differences.

3. Stay optimistic and be good at "making fun in hardship"

There are many difficulties and inconveniences in life in Nigeria. Instead of complaining negatively, it is better to "make fun in hardship". For example, thinking about life every quiet night when there is a power outage, making bold attempts to make "dark dishes" every time there is a shortage of ingredients, and fighting mosquitoes with "fully armed" when they are infested. Discover the charm of Nigeria with your heart. You will enjoy rich and delicious fruits, distinctive traditional costumes, singing and dancing anytime, anywhere, and so on. Being optimistic and loving life is one of the magic weapons to overcome difficulties in life.

4. Improving oneself, based on teaching

Chinese teaching ability is the foundation for Chinese teachers to settle down, and students' progress and love are the source of the sense of accomplishment of Chinese teachers. When suffering from cultural shock, psychological confusion, rejection, fear or even deep anxiety, you may wish to use the improvement of teaching ability as a breakthrough point, concentrate on researching teaching methods, improve teaching efficiency, and use the affirmation of teaching achievements to enhance your confidence in cross-cultural adaptation.

5.2. The Dispatching Unit of Chinese Language Teachers and the Chinese Embassy and Consulate in the Host Country Can Provide More Auxiliary Support

1. Strengthen attention and give information support. First of all, it is necessary to provide more channels for Chinese language teachers to obtain information about Nigeria's social and cultural conditions. For example, sending units can organize experience sharing of previous Chinese language teachers in Nigeria, form a communication sharing group for Nigerian teachers, and Chinese embassies and consulates in the host country can also provide local The detailed introduction of the social environment allows Chinese teachers to have a full understanding and preparation for the environment they will face before they take up their post. Secondly, in addition to cultural training before taking up the post, after taking up the post, it is necessary to continue to pay attention to the life and work conditions of Chinese teachers, communicate regularly, and provide timely help for the difficulties encountered by Chinese teachers in cross-cultural adaptation.

2. Assist in establishing sufficient connections with local Chinese

The Chinese teachers are unaccompanied when they first arrive in a foreign country. Faced with the unacceptable living environment, huge cultural distance and relatively isolated interpersonal communication, every Chinese you meet in a foreign country is a relative of the motherland and can bring them a great spirit. Consolation can also help them tide over difficulties in life. Chinese embassies and consulates in the host country can make a roster of local Chinese to allow Chinese teachers to establish connections with nearby Chinese in time. At the same time, a group of local Chinese teachers can also be formed. The difficulties encountered by teachers in teaching and life are usually in common. Everyone can exchange teaching experience, life experience, help each other in the face of problems, and seek solutions together.

6. Conclusion

With the development of the international promotion of Chinese, the team of international Chinese teachers continues to grow. They travel to foreign countries, struggle in the front line of teaching, and play an important role in the promotion of Chinese. The issue of cross-cultural adaptation will also receive more and more attention. . The cross-cultural coping strategies mentioned in this article are far from enough. How to fully understand the difficulties

encountered in cross-cultural adaptation and the root causes of the difficulties and take effective countermeasures is a problem that we need to further think about.

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