



CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF ASIAN STUDENTS TO CHINA CULTURE.

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Abstract With the increasing number of Asian students, choosing to study china is a good choice without a doubt. Asian students face many challenges in the adaptation process, e.g. managing group projects with Chinese students as well as international students too, dealing with interpersonal relationships, solving academic problems, etc. This study focuses to investigate psychological adaptation, socio-cultural adaptation and academic adaptation, based on Ward's model, and generated nine propositions to explore the Asian students' adaptation in China. Students from Asia and China, as well as teachers, were interviewed to gather the research material, and analyzed in the last. The main finding is that the influence of academic and psychological aspects on Asian students' cultural adaptation is relatively large, especially the language ability, personality, communication. In addition to this, there are some other related factors that we do not mention, e.g. self-confidence, ambitious motivation, value, etc. The purpose of our study is to provide effective and practical advice for Asian students in the adaptation to Chinese culture.

Keywords: *Cultural adaptation; Chinese students; psychological adaptation; socio-cultural adaptation; academic adaptation; language*

1. Introduction

In 1950, China opened its door for the first time to international students, with some students from Asia and Eastern Europe. Almost six decades later, having hosted the Olympic Games and successfully joined the World Trade Organization, China has become more integrated with and also more attractive to the outside world. The country's rapid economic growth and increasing international influence have drawn large numbers of students from abroad. The annual increase in the rates of students entering the country has been in double digits since the 1990s. It is reported that the enrolments of international students in China had reached 195,503 by 2007[1]. These students are involved in different types of study programmers, with Chinese being the most popular subject. The recognition of China as a world power and the desire to have the knowledge and skills in the language and the culture that will open up possibilities of cooperation in businesses and trade with their home countries are the key factors that motivate the students to study in China [2].

Chinese also seems to be acquiring priority as a second or foreign language in many countries especially In Asia. According to [3], in Asia, the governments of Korea, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia and Vietnam all encourage their citizens to learn Chinese. This is a very different situation from 30 years ago when, for example, Chinese was forbidden in Indonesia and Cambo Yet the international students in China remain one of the most under-studied populations so far. In particular, very little research has tried to relate academic/ sociocultural adaptation to language attitudes and motivation, and even less research has been devoted to the time effect on the study variables.

The research reported here is to explore Asian students' experience of living and studying in China, to identify the cultural adaptation issues on the individual and organizational level, as well as to investigate factors influencing the process of cultural adaptation. This research also aims to put forward some suggestions for improving Asian students' acculturation and to provide universities with suggestions for supporting students through the tough cultural adaptation process. Model of acculturation of process from [4], is to be adopted in this study to assist in analyzing the difficulties and challenges encountered by Asian students in the process of cross-cultural adaptation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Two Important Facts adaption of Asian Students in China

International students experienced difficulties elicited by the new culture in addition to the problems encountered by domestic students [5]. Author identified four domains of problems of adaptation in studying foreign students' acculturation: environmental (such as climate, dress, housing and food), sociocultural (such as interpersonal and intergroup relations, and social contact in general), academic (such as courses, exams, deadlines and language comprehension) and psychological (such as mental health status, self-esteem and identity)[6]. Accordingly, more recent studies show that Asian students encounter problems pertaining not only to sociocultural adaptation, such as adjustment to social customs and norms [7], and psychological adaptation, such as feeling depressed, anxious and lonely due to the loss of their social support networks [8, 9], but also academic adaptation such as worrying about their language proficiency and academic performance[9-11].

The primary task of most Asian students is to obtain good academic results in the China. Academic issues are at the forefront of both these students' and their institutions' concerns. Research shows that academic success has a significant impact on students' sociocultural adaptation and psychological wellbeing and vice versa [11]. It can be inferred that the relation between sociocultural adaptation and academic adaptation is significantly positively associated and may be reciprocally causally related. 'Adaptation' in this paper refers to Asian students' sociocultural and academic integration with the target language group, which are seen as the two indices for measuring adaptation in this paper. This conceptualization combines Ward's notion of sociocultural adaptation that refers to an individual's ability to fit in or negotiate interactive aspects of the new cultural environment [12] with Tinto's academic adaptation that refers to an individual's ability to be involved in positive educational outcomes [13].

2.2 Asian students' Cultural Adaptation-why is it important?

Given that the majority of difficulties confronted by foreign students can be attributed to cultural differences, it is fair to conclude that the greatest obstacles faced by Asian students should be attributed to the various cultural features that are different between the Asia and China [14-16]. Nevertheless, even in the some Asian countries have similar culture, research has concluded that

Asian students still suffer from stress, regardless of the cultural similarity. Hence, it is important to question: why is it important to keep an eye on Chinese students' cultural adaptation issues in a specific way?

Based on the previous empirical studies, whether in similar or different culture contexts, Asian students would encounter cultural transition and adjustment issues. In addition, although studies on international students' education have greatly focused on the adaptation of culture issues in many countries, a few studies have been conducted on Asian students in China. For Chinese universities, they are not accustomed to teaching and supporting the Asian students with different scholarships such as Chinese government scholarship, university scholarship and likewise, the challenge is considerable [17]. Accordingly, it is imperative to put an emphasis on this area, especially with an increasing mobility of Asian student's to China. Without comprehensive analysis on exploring their motivation, source of difficulties as well as frustrations, it is difficult for the government, universities and service organizations to propose suitable advice to help students or teachers solve complex adaptation problems. Meanwhile, without in-depth studies on identifying universities' receptivity of diversity and conformity pressure, it is also tough for students to better adjust themselves to the host culture context.

2.3 Model of Acculturation Process-thinking outside of original's box

The theory of this thesis is based on the "model of acculturation process". Ward and his colleagues put forward a new theoretical framework by integrating cultural shock into social culture learning [18]. In the theoretical structure part, Ward and his colleagues argue that two outcomes of acculturation process may be taken into account, which are psychological adaptation and socio cultural adaptation [4].

More specifically, Ward (1990) and his colleagues identified that culture has implicitly incorporated adaptation in both a psychological dimension as well as a sociocultural dimension. The psychological adaptation mainly refers to feeling of well-being and satisfaction of the individual, while the sociocultural adaptation relates to the ability of the individual to fit into and interact with the new cultural context [17, 19]. They found that psychological adjustment, operationalized in terms of mood disturbance, can be influenced by individual personality, life changing events, locus of control and social support variables [20]. While sociocultural

adjustment, measured in terms of the difficulties they confront in daily lives, is more related to variables such as cultural distance, cultural identity, amount of social contact with host nationals, previous cross-cultural experience, and length of residence in host country [21]. Ward and his colleagues also demonstrated the interrelationship between psychological and socio cultural adaptation: they are conceptually and empirically distant but robustly interact with each other¹.

Ward's "model of acculturation process" is also targeted for foreign travelers and sojourners, meaning that it is not a model specifically for international students. As a sub-category in the group of tourists, there must be different characteristics from other cross-cultural travelers, that is, they possess dual identity with both "foreigners" and "students". Identities are important and there is evidence to suggest that students develop additional identities as part of their coping strategies [19]. In addition to integrate with psychological and socio cultural adaptation, they must also learn to adapt to host universities' academic culture for the sake of completing the studies successfully. Therefore, in order to study the cross-cultural adaptation ability of Chinese students, this study is designed to going to add the academic domain into Ward and Searle's model.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Field Survey

Fieldwork, also known as field surveys or field studies, belongs to the field of anthropology, and is mainly used in the area of social science. One of its most important research methods is to participate in the interview, which requires the investigators to live together with the surveyed people for a period of time to observe and understand their society and culture. In this study, the field survey is divided into five stages: a) preparation of the relevant literature stage, b) the beginning stage (generate propositions), c) the investigation phase, d) write the investigation and research report stage, and e) supplement the investigation phase. Propositions help us to decide what type of data that is needed, and what type of data we can ignore, to support the direction of the research.

3.2 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is an inductive approach to examine the relationship between theory and research. Some common methods include in-depth interviews with individuals, group discussions, diary and journal exercises, and in-context observations, which could be conducted in person, by

telephone, via videoconferencing and/or through internet solutions. The reason why we chose a qualitative research method is because it can help us achieve our research purpose by closely examining and analyzing the individual factors in-depth, such as exploring the Asian students' daily life, learning experience, interpersonal communication and other aspects. By summarizing the challenges, it is conducive for us to raise some suggestions accordingly. Qualitative research allows us to go more in-detail into the cross-cultural adaptation process of a few Chinese students.

3.3 Questionnaires

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, questionnaires were prepared based on the standard. The prepared questionnaires are shown in the following table.

Factors	Questions
Psychological adaption Social Support	1. Have you ever encountered challenges in interpersonal communication? If so, what are the challenges? How to deal with them?
Personality	2. What kind of psychological development have you experienced during your stay in China? Have you ever experienced cultural shock? If so, how to adjust?
Sociocultural adaption Cultural experience	3. Did you have in-depth research or knowledge preparation about China before coming? If yes, please specify in details. 4. Have you ever had the experience of traveling or studying in other countries before coming? If yes, please specify in which country.
Cultural Difference	5. How much did you know the Chinese culture before coming? 6. What kind of cultural difference can you identify, coming China to your country.
Expectations	7. What is the motivation for studying in China? 8. What is your impression for studying and living in China?
Cultural Identity	9. Has the studying experience in China brought you any changes in the perception of cultural identity? If yes, what kind of changes?

Academic adaption	10. Have you ever experienced challenges when studying in China? If so, what are the challenges? How to cope with them? 11. What is your evolution on the teaching way or studying environment in china?
Communicate with tutors	12. What is the difference between your country teacher and Chinese teacher?
Language ability	13. What is your Chinese language ability before coming to china? Can you communicate with Chinese student smoothly?
Suggestions and Evaluations	14. What is the challenges of cross-cultural adaption that was not mentioned before?

4. Research Results or Research Outcomes

4.1 Data Analysis

In qualitative data analysis, the process of interviewing is not only the process of collecting data, but also the process of analyzing data. The whole process was created based on new concepts and theories. For example, this interviews, about the factors that impacts the Asian students' adaptation to the Chinese culture, personal self-confidence was mentioned many times. Self-confidence was not considered before the interviews, it could be part of the personal aspects, but not mentioned explicitly in the theory. The data obtained through the interview is usually relatively scattered, hence we need to reduce the data to manageable scale, so that it can be later codified. There are two parts of research process. The first one is to interview, individual interviews were conducted and record. Secondly, the recorded interviews were transcribed.

4.2 Research Results

The research results has been summarized in the following table.

Factors	Contents	Result	Influence Size
Social Support	Social support has a positive relationship with Asian students' psychological adaptation in China.	Yes	Medium
Personality	Personality traits have an impact on Chinese students' psychological adaptation	Yes	Big
Previous cross cultural Experience	Previous cross-cultural experience has a positive relationship on Asian students' Sociocultural adaptation.	Yes	Medium
Cultural Difference	Cultural distance has a negative relationship with Chinese students' sociocultural adaptation. Previous Cross cultural Experience	Yes	Small
Expectations	Expectations have a positive relationship with Chinese students' sociocultural adaptation.	Yes	Small
Cultural Identity	Cultural identity has a negative relationship with Chinese students' sociocultural adaptation.	Yes	Medium
Pedagogic Difference	Pedagogic difference has a negative relationship with Chinese students' academic adaptation.	Yes	Small
Academic Communication with Teachers	Academic communication with teachers has an impact on Asian students' academic adaptation	Yes	Big
Academic Language Proficiency	Academic language proficiency has a positive relationship with Chinese students' academic adaptation.	Yes	Big

5. Conclusion

Through in-depth interviews of 15 Asian students, 4 Chinese students and 3 Chinese teachers working in Shaanxi University of Science and technology. We investigated Asian students' cross-cultural adaptation challenges. The factors affecting Asian students' cultural adaptation were explored to some extent.

Conclusions in order of importance are as follows:

1. Language barriers have big influence on Asia students' academic adaptation.
2. Communication has big influence on Chinese students' academic adaptation.
3. Outgoing personality has big influence on Asian students' psychological adaptation.
4. Social support has medium influence on Asian students' psychological adaptation.
5. Previous cross-cultural experience has medium influence on Asian students' socio cultural adaptation.
6. Cultural identity has medium influence on Asian students' socio cultural adaptation.
7. Cultural distance has small influence on Asian students' socio cultural adaptation.
8. Expectation has small influence on Asian students' socio cultural adaptation.

Pedagogic difference has small influence on Asian students' academic cultural adaptation.

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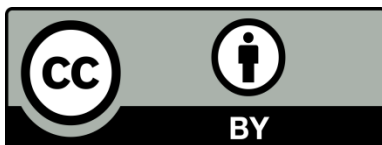
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Dedication

Not mentioned.

Conflicts of Interest

There are no conflicts to declare.



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