

# On the Overseas Practice of the Master of International Chinese Education from the Perspective of Cross-cultural Communication<sup>①</sup>

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**Abstract:** As an important part of specialty construction, overseas practice is an important link to improve the cross-cultural communication ability of Chinese international education postgraduates and to ensure the quality of talents training, the adaptation of cross-cultural communication in the aspects of life, psychology and work must be attached great importance to by relevant departments and training units. The National Hanban and other volunteer dispatch and service organizations should reform the content and methods of volunteer training, and strengthen the training of cross-cultural communication ability of volunteers; the training units should put cross-cultural communication at the core of professional construction, general Secretary Xi Jinping's theories and discussions on "civilization" and "civilization exchange and mutual learning" are taken as guiding principles for the construction of intercultural communication courses and professional practice for postgraduates. The postgraduates themselves should improve their cross-cultural communicative competence and psychological adaptability in their professional practice and practice.

**Keywords:** Chinese International Education; intercultural communication; Overseas internship

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## I. Introduction

"Cross-cultural Communication" refers to the communication and communication between people of different cultural backgrounds. In 1959, the famous American Cultural Anthropology Houle (Hall) in his book *The Silent Language* first proposed this concept. According to this theory, culture is everywhere, yet it exerts an imperceptible influence on people's communication. People's understanding of the same cultural phenomenon is often different based on different values and ways of doing things.

In practical communication, people often adhere to the logic of cultural centralism, thinking that their own way of life is normal, different from their own way of life is considered as a cultural "other". In many cases, the culture of "the other" can't even be understood, thus paving the way for the emergence of cultural conflicts. In the 1960s, American anthropologist Robert Oberg put forward the concept of "culture shock". He pointed out that cultural shock is "because of the loss of their own familiar social signals or symbols, for the other side of the social symbols are not familiar with the deep psychological anxiety".<sup>[1]</sup> In Oberg's view, no matter how well prepared an individual is to enter a new cultural environment, this deep anxiety is bound to occur in him. Oberg's culture shock theory provides a new perspective for the study of cross-cultural Communication. Over the past 50 years, scholars have shown that individuals who carry out cross-cultural communication must constantly overcome the negative effects brought about by cultural shock and actively adjust or change their values, communicative behaviors, living habits and thinking patterns, to adapt to the new cultural environment of social communication, and ultimately achieve the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication.

In recent years, with the gradual expansion of the "Belt and Road" circle of friends and the deepening of the construction of the community of human destiny, the overseas Chinese language communication market has expanded dramatically, and the number of international master of education in Chinese at home has also increased.

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Based on the requirements of professional personnel training objectives and the need to serve the economic and cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries, each enrollment and training unit actively promotes the overseas practice construction project of Chinese international education, or sets up its own overseas practice bases through various channels, or Confucius, Confucius's classroom as a carrier to send Chinese teachers to overseas volunteers, or with international schools to establish a domestic practice base, etc. , to create favorable conditions for students' professional practice. However, different from other majors, cross-culture is the essential content and part of the internal structure of the major of Chinese international education. <sup>[2]</sup>The major difficulty in the practice of the master of international education in Chinese does not come from professional knowledge and skills, it comes from the problem of adaptability brought by cross-cultural communication. Therefore, in-depth study of the cross-cultural problems encountered in the overseas practice of Chinese international education master graduate students is needed to improve the level of professional construction and the quality of personnel training, it is the need to improve the overseas dissemination of Chinese and the cause of cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries, but also the need to smooth the implementation of the strategy of "Chinese culture going out".

## **II. Cross-cultural communication problems encountered in the overseas practice of the master of international education in Chinese**

Overseas practice is a key link in the training of talents for the master of international education in Chinese, and a strong ability of cross-cultural communication is a basic requirement for the training of talents for this major, the interaction between Chinese student teachers and overseas Chinese learners is in itself a cross-cultural communication process, at the same time, it is also a very important but also very easy to have problems in the process of cultivating the master of international education in Chinese. Generally speaking, these problems mainly focus on the following three aspects.

### **2.1 Problems of life adaptation caused by differences in social and cultural environments**

Since the beginning of the overseas internship for Chinese international education graduate students, how to adapt to the challenge brought by the foreign culture is the first step for them to complete the internship. Some foreign scholars believe that in the structural dimension of cross-cultural adaptation, social and cultural adaptation is placed in a very important position. <sup>[3]</sup> Generally speaking, the social and cultural adaptation problems that graduate students of Chinese International Education face mainly include language, custom, life habit, religion, public service, social order and public morality consciousness. Taking language as an example, language is the first problem and the first communication method that graduate students in overseas practice face. English is the main foreign language that Chinese International Education Graduate Students Learn in China, however, their mother tongue may be another language when they are sent to the country, which makes it possible for most graduate students to face the language barrier and the cultural connotation behind the language before they go abroad for their internship. Even if sent to English-speaking countries, different cultural genes can easily lead to interns and local residents in communication and understanding of discomfort and misunderstanding. What's more, most of the graduate students who take internships abroad are going to their first country of employment as well as going abroad for the first time. <sup>[4]</sup> Before that, they did not have time to adapt to the overseas social and cultural environment, the first time to carry out cross-cultural communication in a foreign country has brought them great challenges. There are studies that show, the graduate students have difficulties in Thailand in such as "understanding Thai humor" , "daily life communication" , "participation in social communication activities" , "adaptation to means of transportation" , "adaptation to diet" , "adaptation to climate" , "participation in religious activities" and "adaptation to accommodation" . <sup>[5]</sup>

### **2.2 Problems of psychological adaptation caused by culture shock**

After Oberg, Adrian Furnham and Stephen Bochner went on to argue that cultural shock is a psychological response to an unfamiliar cultural environment. <sup>[6]</sup> When unfamiliar symbols, customs, patterns of behavior, social relationships, and values take the place of familiar ones, anxiety, restlessness, and even depression set in, that it causes all kinds of mental and physical problems. <sup>[7]</sup> Graduate students of Chinese International Education are likely to have depression, anxiety, irritability, disappointment, loneliness and other negative emotions during their overseas internship. Bi Jiwan, a scholar, explained it as: "It is a feeling of insecurity, disappointment and fear caused by physical and mental maladjustment. It is a feeling of disappointment and boredom caused by fear and antipathy towards the new culture. <sup>[8]</sup> Li naiming's investigation showed that he felt deeply alone and helpless, as if he had lost the care and sympathy of all people, generally speaking, in the process of cross-cultural adaptation, the students who went to Thailand for the master of international education in Chinese are in good condition, with few negative emotions or thoughts, but more personal emotions such as depression, anxiety and homesickness. <sup>[5]</sup>

### 2.3 Work adjustment problems encountered in the process of overseas internship

Most of the graduate students of Chinese International Education have never been engaged in a full-time job. It is inevitable to face many challenges and practical difficulties to carry out Chinese language teaching and Chinese culture promotion in a cross-cultural environment. Interns should not only change their roles as quickly as possible psychologically, but also be able to adapt to work in a cross-cultural environment, such as a new teaching environment and teaching conditions, deal with the relationship with overseas teaching objects, foreign colleagues, complete the cultural promotion, project operation, emergency response to emergencies and other specific work. However, international masters in Chinese language education students interning overseas still face many problems in work adjustment. A survey of graduate students interning in Australia shows that, interns to Australia's education policy, teaching mode is not adapted. In Australia, the instructor can only teach as a teacher if he or she has obtained a teacher's qualification in advance, and interns without a teacher's qualification must be accompanied by a teacher with a teacher's qualification, the policy has made it more difficult for the volunteer community to adapt, with some reporting difficulties in coordinating with teachers and complaints about gaps in identity. Such as the diversity of Australian students, the lack of a unified and appropriate curriculum and teaching materials, the students' uneven level of Chinese, and so on, have also brought great challenges to the work of volunteers adaptation. The volunteers who grew up in the "examination-oriented education" atmosphere in China are usually used to evaluate teaching by their grades and classroom by the order of their courses, which is quite different from the western educational concept of attaching importance to cultivating students' innovative spirit, so much so that students in the survey said it was indeed a bit difficult to adapt to Australian students' classroom performance.<sup>[9]</sup>

### **III. Solutions to intercultural communication problems in the process of overseas practice for master students of Chinese International Education**

As a kind of cross-cultural communication behavior, although in different countries and regions, there are differences in the overseas practice adaptation of Chinese International Education Graduate Students, but the cross-cultural communication problems are objective. Therefore, from the perspective of cross-cultural theory, it is very important and urgent to carry out the research on the overseas practice of Chinese international education postgraduates and put forward the concrete ways to solve the cross-cultural communication problems of the interns.

#### 3.1 Overseas internship dispatch and management organizations: strengthen cross-cultural communication training and other services

In addition to the overseas bases built by the Postgraduate Training Unit of the Master of international education in Chinese, the overseas internship of this major still mainly depends on the Hanban of the state, Hanban mainly selects qualified students as Chinese volunteers to carry out Chinese language promotion overseas. According to the regulations of the Hanban of the state, all Chinese volunteers selected are required to receive comprehensive ability training and outward bound training before being sent out, and pass the examination, after obtaining the certificate of Chinese teacher's volunteer qualification from Hanban, we can go abroad to carry out Chinese promotion activities. However, there is no significant difference between cross-cultural training and non-cross-cultural training, which indicates that cross-cultural training does not achieve the desired results.<sup>[10]</sup> Surveys show that the majority of students who have been trained believe that Hanban training places too much emphasis on classroom management skills and neglects the improvement of cross-cultural communication skills, volunteers travelling to Italy did not even receive any training in the Italian language and culture.<sup>[4]</sup> Some scholars have pointed out that cross-cultural cultivation in China pays more attention to the differences of cultural forms and lacks a deep understanding of the universality of culture.<sup>[11]</sup> Before taking the post, Hanban's practice of training Chinese volunteers is undoubtedly correct and necessary, but the training effect is not good and we have to have a deep reflection on what and how to train. For example, can Hanban consider carrying out classified training according to the types of language and culture in the country where the interns come to work, so as to increase the case teaching of cross-cultural communication, excellent interns from previous years to teach cross-cultural communication experience, and so on.

Generally speaking, the cultural (education) Department of Chinese diplomatic and consular missions abroad is responsible for the management of the overseas internship for students of Chinese language international education. The management includes the reception, assignment, placement, work and study of interns, it also includes organizing interns to participate in relevant training, research and various social activities. In addition, the agency should devote more attention to introducing interns to the economic, social and cultural environment of the host country, to help students better understand the cultural background of the country they live in by making TV films, giving lectures, recording moocs, setting up group chat rooms and receiving psychological counseling from interns, to promote students' ability of cross-cultural Communication, cultural promotion and professional teaching, and to solve the specific problems in the process of cross-cultural

communication, so as to ensure the successful completion of professional practice tasks.

Confucius has been playing an active role as an important institution for the overseas internship of graduate students majoring in Chinese International Education. In promoting the cross-cultural communication of the interns, Confucius College should take it as an important content to establish a stable and high-level teaching team with cross-cultural communication ability, which can play a role in teaching and helping students, to Act as a tutor for graduate students in teaching Chinese in a cross-cultural context, or to act as a temporary tutor in the process of graduate student thesis writing, it can also be used as a tutor for graduate students to help them integrate into the social life of the host country as soon as possible. At the same time, some scholars have pointed out that Confucius should also strengthen institution building, teaching management, teacher training and life management, in order to create a interns to feel happy, a sense of belonging, conducive to the continuous improvement of their business capacity of the collective atmosphere.<sup>[12]</sup>

### 3.2 Braining unit: Placing cross-cultural communication at the core of specialty construction

To solve the problem of overseas practice for graduate students of Chinese International Education, the first step is to start with the training units. In view of the specialty practice particularity, the training unit should carry out the cross-cultural communication ability training in each link of the specialty construction. In terms of curriculum construction, we should further strengthen the construction of cross-cultural communication curriculum and strengthen case teaching, general Secretary Xi Jinping's important exposition on "civilization" and "exchange and mutual learning among civilizations" will be taken as an important part of the cross-cultural communication course for graduate students. March 2014, in an important speech delivered at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in Paris, Xi said, "civilization is colorful, and human civilization, because of its diversity, has the value of exchange and mutual learning." "Civilization is equal, and human civilization, because of equality, has the premise of exchange and mutual learning." "Civilization is inclusive, and human civilization, because of inclusiveness, has the impetus of exchange and mutual learning".<sup>[13]</sup> While shedding light on the essence of human civilization, Xi also expounded the basic connotation of "exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations" and China's attitude and basic policy toward different civilizations. Xi's understanding of civilization and modes of civilized communication can be taken as the basic principle and starting point for the construction of courses for master of international education in Chinese and the cross-cultural communication among Chinese volunteers. As for the construction of practice bases, the establishment of relatively fixed overseas practice bases in a targeted way and the relatively single and permanent overseas practice bases are conducive to the development of cross-cultural education in a targeted way, it is conducive to the formation of more stable characteristics of professional training, to the professional accumulation and transmission of cross-cultural communication experience, and to the establishment of close ties and stable relations between the training units and relevant institutions abroad, to solve a series of problems in the process of overseas internship. In the field of graduation thesis writing, the Thesis Topic Selection, teaching practice, cultural communication and cross-cultural studies should be combined in an integrated design to highlight the specialty and practicality of graduation thesis, to enhance the theoretical level of cross-cultural communication and solve the practical problems encountered in cross-cultural practice, so as to provide research basis and experience for the cultivation of cross-cultural communication ability.

### 3.3 Graduate students: Improve cross-cultural communication ability and psychological adaptability consciously

The key to the successful completion of the overseas internship for graduate students is the exertion of their own initiative and enthusiasm. In the course of daily study, postgraduates should take the initiative to strengthen the study of cross-cultural communication courses and related theories, so as to lay a solid foundation for cross-cultural communication during their internship abroad. Students should fully understand and study the language, culture, social customs and educational conditions of the country they are going to work in, so as to prepare for cross-cultural communication, taking into full account the difficulties of cross-cultural communication, maintaining proper psychological expectations, making well-prepared plans in advance, improving the ability of resisting pressure and psychological adaptation, and making good psychological preparation for completing the internship task on one's own. In the process of cross-cultural communication, postgraduates should treat different cultures and cultural phenomena with respect, equality and inclusiveness, to prevent the emergence of cultural superiority, cultural inferiority and cultural unconsciousness brought about by cultural centralism, to learn to make friends with local colleagues and people, to expand the scope of communication, and to actively integrate into local social life and activities, share successful experiences with peers, deal with negative emotions, etc. .

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