

“Chinese Culture All-Dimensional Introduction” for Foreign Experts in the Fields of Culture & Education

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Abstract: The paper creatively proposes to conduct “Chinese Culture All-Dimensional Introduction” research on foreign experts who work in the fields of culture and education and also brings forward feasible and practical concrete measures for the “All-Dimensional (in their daily life, teaching and social communications) introduction”. These concrete measures include upon the arrival of the foreign experts to China, setting up Chinese culture courses, Chinese language courses in a well-organized and systematic way; relevant governmental department lecturing on the correlative policies, laws and regulations; governmental bodies, social, educational and cultural institutions offering various seminars, cultural festivals, celebrations and competitions, etc. to give prominence to the theme of Chinese culture. A case study on American expert, Mr. Thomas Wayne Simmons, who won 2004 National Friendship Award is also conducted. The positive meaning of the research is summarized: helping foreign experts adjust to their work and life better and quicker; holding high the great banner of culture to promote deeper Sino-foreign communication and co-operation; spreading Chinese culture across the oceans and continents to upgrade China’s international status among alien cultures.

Key Words: Foreign Experts, Culture & Education; Chinese Culture Introduction; All-Dimensional.

I. Introduction

With the ever-increasing of China’s foreign exchange and co-operation, more and more foreign experts who work in the fields of culture and education have come to China. Their numbers and qualifications witness a steady increase in recent years. The nation’s vast landscape, abundant resources, long history and splendid culture have attracted foreign friends from all over the world and also attracted those excellent international talents who are willing to undertake cultural and educational tasks in China.

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As a very special group, foreign experts who work in the fields of education and culture have different understandings and interpretations about China, however, there is one thing in common, that is, their curiosity, interest and puzzle towards Chinese culture. It is not hard to understand the curiosity, interest and puzzle towards this civilized nation who has more than five thousand years of splendid culture. The current author once entertained one foreign expert who came to China for the first time and encountered an interesting story. After seeing lots of wreaths at his apartment complex, that American expert asked me to introduce him the celebration activity or festival with great enthusiasm and pleasure. Obviously, he knows nothing about Chinese funeral wreath. If not for the current author's timely communication, he will undoubtedly not only embarrass himself but also for his ignorant action bring unnecessary troubles and conflict between himself and the relatives of the dead. Another interesting example is that in Japanese the common Chinese character for daughter is actually mother. If anyone who does not know this fact want to guess the meaning literally, he or she will be bound to encounter mistakes in cross-cultural communication, therefore, proper decoding diverse culture is the key and precondition of cross-culture communication. How we can facilitate the new-coming foreign experts to adjust to Chinese living and working conditions is the issue posing in front of us.

II. Foreign Expert Chinese Culture All-Dimensional Introduction

Based on so many years of foreign affairs practice and experience, the current author creatively proposes to conduct Chinese culture all-dimensional introduction to foreign experts who work in the fields of education and culture and also suggests practical and feasible measures for the introduction.

1. The Principles of the Introduction

1) Practicability

The introduction requires practicability and practicability should be emphasized. Upon arrival, for the newly arrived foreign experts, they urgently need to know the Survival Culture, such as asking for directions, shopping, boarding buses, buying tickets, etc. After they are settled, they will need to feel Leisure Culture, such as studying Chinese, sight-seeing, practicing Shadow-boxing or Qigong, etc. Therefore, Chinese culture introduction requires the close connection with the requirements at their different stages and levels to stand out its practicability.

2) Suitability

The introduction should also focus on its suitability. It will not be suitable to talk at length with Japanese friends about Japan's invasion to China and Nanjing Massacre. It is obviously true that we should respect history, however, we must take the audience's endurance and receptiveness towards the introduction content into full consideration. We should try our utmost to arrange the content to be easily acceptable and suitable for their diverse needs.

3) Contrastiveness

We need to contrast Chinese culture with foreign cultures, thus we can find the differences and common grounds to provide guidance for the introduction.

3. The Methodologies of the Introduction

For this special group, the methodologies of the introduction should also be special, diverse and more importantly all-dimensional and multiple. In terms of all-dimensional, we mean that the introduction is conducted in their daily life, their daily work and social contacts. In terms of multiple, we mean that the methodologies for the introduction should be flexible. It can be conducted in the formal classroom teaching and also in the various activities combined recreation with education.

4. The Content of the Introduction

On account of the particularity of this special group, the content of introduction should be mainly focused on the primary culture, that is, fact culture (history, festivals and taboo, etc), achievement culture (novels, songs and stories, etc.) and surface behavior culture. Special attention should be paid to speech act, such as the speech act in family life and working life. The introduction of high-level culture depends on the individual and special attention should be paid to deep-structured culture act, such as aesthetics, sense of value and view on friendship, etc.

In addition, while conducting Chinese culture introduction, the following five cultural layers should not be ignored: 1) The feelings of ethnic groups and history; 2) The differences of life-style; 3) The differences of cultural tradition; 4) The differences of sense of value; 5) The influence of ways of thinking.

III. A Case Study on American Expert, Mr. Thomas Wayne Simmons

The current author has conducted a case study on the American expert, Mr. Thomas Wayne Simmons who won 2004 China Friendship Award and warmly received by Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao.

1. Question

We found that there are some foreign experts who are able to blend into Chinese culture very well and participate in all sorts of activities or games actively. They play well with their Chinese colleagues and students and enjoy their everyday life in China, however, there are also some who are always on pins and needles everyday and dare not to communicate with others and avoid all kinds of social contacts and cultural entertainments. The question is: why there are two so different conditions mentioned above?

2. General Introduction of the Case Study

(1) Subject

Some basic information: Mr. Thomas Wayne Simmons, male, born in October, 1948, in the United of America. M.A. He has been teaching English in China for the past 13 years and the working areas are Shandong and Henan. He won provincial-level friendship award and the national friendship award and warmly received by Chinese state leader. Mr. Simmons has a very strong interest for Chinese culture. He has decided that if possible, he is willing to dedicate his rest of life to teach in China. His teaching content is rich and teaching style is diverse and flexible and he is warmly welcomed by his students. Furthermore, he has excellent relations with the students and many students call him intimately “Daddy Wayne” and treat him as a fatherly figure.

(2) Study Method

Survey is conducted according to the practical conditions of the subject. Questionnaire surveys on himself, his colleagues and students are conducted and relevant data were collected.

3. Result and Analysis

Through the survey we found that Mr. Simmons himself, his colleagues and students all agreed that he has a very strong interest in Chinese culture and high motivation for studying Chinese language and culture. He is willing to use the Chinese culture and language he gained to serve the university, to serve our students, therefore, we found that his attitude of Chinese culture learning is excellent. Furthermore, he has strong self-confidence and in the English classroom he can design some Chinese culture and language phenomena to achieve high interaction with his student. We found that Mr. Simmons is extroversive in personality and he is a very humorous man in and outside of the classroom. His smiles always influence everyone around him. In addition, he bears no prejudice on the Chinese Nation and no Ethnocentrism as well. Mr. Simmons also has high tolerance for foreign cultures. According to the survey, he believed that there is no good and bad in culture, it is just that different people do the same thing in different ways, which should deserve understanding and respect.

4. Considerations of the Study

1) Consideration of the Personality of the Subject

For many year, we always consider what kind of foreign experts are prone to Chinese culture introduction. From the above study we can arrive at some conclusions. Firstly, the person should be friendly to the nation and has strong interest in Chinese culture. Secondly, the person should have strong motivation to learn and know Chinese culture. Thirdly, the person should be extroversive, instead of being introversive and bear no racial prejudice. Fourthly but not lastly, the person should have high sense of identity and tolerance. It goes without saying that there are probably more personality items for us to carry out further investigation and study.

2) Consideration of Objective Factors

Apart from the personal factors we mentioned above, objective factors cannot be overlooked. Objective factors can be composed of China's foreign policy, foreign experts living and working conditions and their social communication environment. Our current foreign policy is favorable to attract more experts. The working and living conditions offered by each organization and department which employs foreign experts are the key to keep excellent talents and enable them to learn and know Chinese culture consciously and follow up to popularize and publicize the culture to promote China's international image.

IV. The Tentative Plan to Establish Foreign Experts Chinese Culture

All-Dimensional Introduction Handbook

This tentative plan has been in the current author's mind for so long and only till this date, it came into being in words. Establishing foreign experts Chinese culture all-dimensional introduction handbook has significant meaning. Our cultural introduction work can be based on

this and have rules to follow after the handbook's establishment. It also offers foundation and reference for our nation's relevant departments to make decisions and provides basis for further study of correlative cultural introduction projects. More importantly, it can offer real help and assistance for foreign experts to solve their cultural perplexity after their arrival in China and enable them to adjust to their working and living conditions as quickly as possible. The establishment of the handbook can enable us to hold high the great banner of culture and promote sino-foreign exchange and co-operation in depth and in harmonious development.

1. First Step to Establish the Handbook: Culture Testing Planning and Construction

Culture testing is necessary and helpful. Its establishment can help us act with a well-defined objective in mind, not only focusing on the focal points of culture introduction, but also leaving out no details. Prophase testing provides foundation and reference of culture introduction for subsequent testing, while subsequent testing is not only the testing for foreign experts mastery of Chinese culture, but also the supplement and sublimation for prophase testing.

2. Second Step to Establish the Handbook: Culture Testing Planning and Construction: Formulate and Plan Chinese Culture Introduction Courses Syllabus

If the conditions permit, organizations employing foreign experts can set up Chinese culture introduction courses, including Chinese language courses and other courses with the main theme of culture, such as Chinese Calligraphy, Chinese Cuisine, Chinese Martial Arts, etc. Through systematic and all-sided culture teaching, we can cultivate the cross-culture awareness and communicative competence of foreign experts and finally achieve the highest level of cross-culture communication---empathy, that is, to experience the target culture from the opposite.

3. Third Step to Establish the Handbook: Design Activities for Culture Introduction

The activities for culture introduction should be rich, interesting and widely covered. Relevant governmental departments can be invited to lecture on the correlative policies, laws and regulations and governmental bodies, social, educational and cultural institutions to offer various seminars, cultural festivals, celebrations and competitions, etc. to give prominence to the theme of Chinese culture. Among them, some of the typical examples are: Shandong Foreign Experts Day and Shandong National Day Celebration sponsored by Foreign Affairs Office of Shandong People's Government; Shandong Excellence in Teaching for Foreign Experts Working in the Fields of Culture and Education and Teacher's Day Celebration sponsored by Shandong Education Department; Qilu Friendship Award sponsored by Shandong Personnel Department. Every organization employing foreign experts can conduct introduction work featuring Chinese culture according to practical situation. For example, based on the traditional Chinese festivals, such as Spring Festival, Lantern Festival, Dragon-Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival Shandong Jiaotong University arranges foreign experts to participate in different folk-custom activities to enable them to really feel the Chinese taste, Chinese festivals and Chinese culture.

4. Fourth Step to Establish the Handbook: Design and Set Up Topics Featuring Culture Content and Phenomena

This step is actually the elaboration of the second step. Under the guidance of culture introduction courses syllabus, the extensive and profound Chinese culture content and phenomena are hacked, classified, induced and summarized to design and set up systematic and detailed special topics. Its role is more like culture dictionary rather than special topics. If there is anything foreign experts need, they can always turn to the handbook for the answer. It goes without saying that it is very difficult to compile this handbook by which requires joint co-operations and concentrated research between people working in the fields of foreign affairs and Chinese culture. At present, one educational research project— “Chinese Culture All-Dimensional Introduction” for Foreign Experts to Shandong was conducted at Shandong Jiaotong University with the current author as the project leader. This project has achieved primary success.

V. Issues Required Attention in the Process of Culture Introduction

1. Foreign experts whose mother tongues are English, Japanese and Russian consist of the majority of the overall foreign expert in China. Therefore, the quality work of Chinese culture introduction for them determines the success of our work. Therewith, we should conduct comparative research between Chinese culture and Japanese Culture, between Chinese culture and English culture, between Chinese culture and Russian culture to find the common grounds and similarities to bring to a great height of development and for the differences, it should be dealt with caution and detailed and patient explanations for the purpose of harmonious co-existence and mutual supplement of the common grounds and differences in culture introduction.
2. The collision, melting and harmonious co-existence between Chinese and foreign cultures requires further adaptive research. There should be a process from culture shock, culture collision and culture conflict to the melting and co-existence between the two cultures, sometimes, the process is a lengthy one, which needs a great deal of culture adjustment work, however, the proverb: *Every cloud has a silver lining.* is the portraiture and praise for the winners of Chinese culture introduction.

VI. Conclusion

The paper creatively proposes Chinese culture all-dimensional introduction for foreign experts working in the fields of education and culture in China and elaborates on the principles, methodologies and contents of the introduction. A case study on American expert, Mr. Thomas Wayne Simmons is conducted. Based on the study, a tentative plan to establish the handbook of Chinese culture all-dimensional introduction for foreign experts is proposed. The viewpoints and assumptions in the current paper are far from mature. It is the author’s wish that the study is like a modest spur to induce others to come forward with new ideas and solutions. With our joint forces and efforts, we are probably able to solve the cultural puzzles foreign experts encountered after their arrival in China and help them adjust to various circumstances as quickly as possible for the sole purpose of contributing to the construction of a harmonious word and holding high the great banner of culture to promote sino-foreign communications and co-operations in depth and in harmonious development.

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