

## *Original Paper*

# Research on the Adaptation of Chinese Language Teachers' Roles in the International Spread of Chinese Culture

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Received: March 29, 2024

Accepted: May 27, 2024

Online Published: June 17, 2024

doi:10.22158/wjeh.v6n3p89

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/wjeh.v6n3p89>

### **Abstract**

*With the Ministry of Education's Center for Language Education and Cooperation accelerating the organization and implementation of "Chinese + Vocational Skills" education, research related to "Chinese + Vocational Education" has gradually enriched. The aim of this paper is to deeply explore the role adaptation paths of international Chinese education teachers. Through one-on-one interviews with the international Chinese education teacher community, the problems encountered in the role adaptation process are integrated. This aims to promote the effective implementation of the "Chinese + Vocational Education" project and inspire more researchers to focus on the development issues of the international Chinese education teacher community.*

### **Keywords**

*Chinese + Vocational Education, International Chinese Education Teachers, Role Adaptation*

## **1. Introduction**

Recently, the Ministry of Education's Center for Language Education and Cooperation has intended to accelerate the organization and implementation of "Chinese + Vocational Skills" education. The main research directions on "Chinese + Vocational Education" in China are as follows:

### *1.1 Development Models, Strategies, and Directions of International Promotion Bases for "Chinese + Vocational Skills"*

Most scholars, based on the background of the continuous deepening of the "Belt and Road" construction and the opening of education to the outside world, explore the background of the "Chinese + Vocational Skills" project and the necessity of establishing international promotion bases for "Chinese + Vocational Skills." Strategies for the development of these bases are proposed based on existing resources, such as You Yong's "Research on the Development Strategies of International

Promotion Bases for 'Chinese + Vocational Skills' under the Background of Cross-Cultural Context" (2021) and Geng Hu, Ma Chen's "Analysis of 'Chinese +' Education Development under the 'Belt and Road' Initiative" (2021).

### *1.2 Research on the Development Achievements of "Chinese + Vocational Skills" in Specific Countries or Regions*

Zeng Guangyu in "Practice and Theoretical Exploration of 'Chinese + Vocational Skills' Education in Rwanda" (2022) focuses on explaining and introducing the three periods experienced by the Confucius Institute at the University of Rwanda in the exploration of "Chinese + Vocational Skills" education and the four main modes of "Chinese + Vocational Skills" education in Rwanda. Xu Yuhong, in "Research on the Implementation of 'Chinese + Vocational Education' Projects in Confucius Institutes in Thailand" (2021), based on questionnaires from Chinese directors, teachers, Thai secretaries, and international Chinese education teacher volunteers from 16 Confucius Institutes in Thailand, conducts interviews with the heads of three typical Confucius Institutes to explore the current situation of "Chinese + Vocational Education" projects in Thailand.

### *1.3 Research on the Application of Information Technology in the Development of "Chinese + Vocational Skills"*

There is not much research on the application of information technology, mainly concentrated in Yu Lan's "Research on the Application of Artificial Intelligence in 'Chinese + Vocational Education'" (2021) and Zhang Le's "The Application Value of Information Technology in Vocational Education Chinese Teaching" (2020). Yu Lan mainly studies how to use artificial intelligence to promote the development of Chinese vocational education, while Zhang Le mainly proposes that Chinese teaching should insist on the application of information technology to reduce students' learning difficulties and promote their future development.

Compared with domestic research, there are currently few studies on the role adaptation of "Chinese + Vocational Education" teachers abroad, mainly focusing on the role adaptation of traditional international Chinese education teachers. Higgins compares the two main roles of teachers in teaching to "local judges" and "pedagogues," where the former also takes on the roles of manager, diagnostic doctor, and facilitator, and the latter's role is a demonstrator, model, and information provider. Underhill believes that the role of teachers is undergoing a transition from "lecturer" to "teacher" to "mentor."

Based on the review of literature, there is a certain lack of research on the role adaptation paths of international Chinese education teachers at home and abroad. This study is built on the collection, sorting, and analysis of interview materials on role adaptation from front-line international Chinese education teachers in "Chinese + Vocational Skills." Combining the methods of narrative research in "qualitative research," the process and results of the study are presented through cases. In specific research work, the macro perspective of institutional analysis and the micro perspective of empirical analysis support each other and complement each other's strengths.

This research aims to conduct one-on-one interview dialogues with the international Chinese education teacher community, analyze the role adaptation problems encountered during their tenure, deeply explore the underlying reasons from theoretical and practical perspectives, integrate effective suggestions, optimize the implementation of the "Chinese + Vocational Skills" project, and focus on the international Chinese education teacher community. This genuinely solves the role adaptation problems of the teaching team, which is beneficial for promoting the "Chinese + Vocational Education" cause, enriching the existing research perspectives on "Chinese + Vocational Skills" at home and abroad, innovating and developing the training mode of international Chinese education teachers, and helping international Chinese education teachers quickly adapt to their roles in the context of "Chinese + Vocational Education" and efficiently achieve teaching goals.

## **2. Research Content on the Role Adaptation Paths of International Chinese Education Teachers**

### *2.1 Interpretation of the Role Adaptation of International Chinese Education Teachers*

The role adaptation of international Chinese education teachers is crucial to the effective implementation of the project. In the context of "Chinese + Vocational Skills," role adaptation in teaching involves teachers gradually understanding their rights and obligations within their professional community and social structure through continuous assimilation and accommodation. This process helps them comprehend role expectations, accurately position their roles, and adjust their behavior until they successfully perform their roles. Additionally, international Chinese education teachers in the "Chinese + Vocational Skills" context need to establish connections with the teaching environment, students, and themselves. They must also pre-analyze the professionalism of the courses they teach, including technical terms and skills, necessitating a role shift from teacher to student to engage in self-learning and knowledge acquisition.

### *2.2 Research Steps for the Role Adaptation of International Chinese Education Teachers*

The research unfolds from three main aspects related to the role adaptation of international Chinese education teachers:

- 1) How to utilize the "Chinese + Vocational Skills" general textbooks in the selection process.
- 2) The actual teaching process of "Chinese + Vocational Skills" by international Chinese education teachers.
- 3) The role of international Chinese education teachers in promoting students' internships and employment.

Adaptation theory guiding the quick role adaptation of international Chinese education teachers is a matter of concern both domestically and internationally. This study aims to propose corresponding role adaptation suggestions for international Chinese education teachers from different backgrounds, supplementing and developing the research on their role adaptation in "Chinese + Vocational Skills." Case studies on the role adaptation of teachers in "Chinese + Vocational Skills" can provide real-world examples, and through the analysis of these cases, targeted suggestions and measures can be proposed

to accelerate role adaptation.

### 3. Issues in the Research on Role Adaptation Paths of International Chinese Education Teachers

In December 2019, Vice Premier Sun Chunlan emphasized at the International Chinese Education Conference the need to integrate specialized courses that adapt to cooperation needs into language teaching and actively promote the "Chinese + Vocational Skills" project to help more people acquire skills and learn Chinese. As the main implementers of this project, the role adaptation issues faced by teachers deserve attention. The "Chinese + Vocational Skills" international Chinese education teachers mainly come from three groups: dispatched teachers from China, local international Chinese education teachers overseas, and international Chinese education teachers teaching online. Different issues have emerged in the role adaptation of these teachers:

#### 3.1 Issues Affecting the Role Adaptation of Dispatched Teachers

To meet the practical talent development needs of Chinese-funded enterprises, the Ministry of Education's Center for Language Education and Cooperation has launched various "Chinese +" specialized courses worldwide, covering areas such as skills training, tourism, electromechanics, agriculture, high-speed rail, and aviation. For example, "Chinese + Bamboo Weaving Technology Training" in Rwanda, "Chinese + Textile and Garment Training" in Kenya, and "Chinese + High-Speed Rail" in Thailand. While these courses are popular among local Chinese learners, they pose significant challenges to the professional skills of dispatched international Chinese education teachers.

The work of dispatched international Chinese education teachers extends beyond traditional teaching and focuses more on communication, involving three main aspects:

- 1) Selection of General Textbooks for "Chinese + Vocational Skills": Textbook development and course content compilation require the involvement of Chinese-funded enterprises, necessitating sufficient professional knowledge from teachers to effectively communicate with these enterprises.
- 2) Actual Teaching of "Chinese + Vocational Skills": Practicality and professionalism are key, requiring teachers to use relevant terminology correctly. The high practicality and communicative nature of the courses pose challenges in lesson preparation, teaching, and assessment.
- 3) Student Internships and Employment: Assessment methods now focus more on students' internships and employment rather than classroom exams, requiring teachers to communicate with students about their employment needs and directions and assist them in mastering relevant Chinese knowledge and skills.

#### 3.2 Issues Affecting the Role Adaptation of Local International Chinese Education Teachers

Local international Chinese education teachers have become a significant force in the construction of international promotion bases for "Chinese + Vocational Skills," but there are still some deficiencies:

- Lack of Chinese Linguistic and Cultural Knowledge: Compared to dispatched teachers, local teachers feel more acutely the difficulties in teaching "Chinese + Vocational Skills."
- Challenges in Textbook Selection: Local teachers face difficulties in understanding professional

Chinese terminology and cross-cultural communication when jointly selecting textbooks with Chinese-funded enterprises.

- Student Internships and Employment: Although local teachers have a language advantage in communicating with students, they face difficulties in conveying students' needs to Chinese-funded enterprises and matching professional terminology in Chinese.

### *3.3 Issues Affecting the Role Adaptation of Online International Chinese Education Teachers*

With the development of the COVID-19 pandemic, online services for "Chinese +" education have emerged, characterized by leveraging modern technology for remote connections and teaching. The main issues for online international Chinese education teachers include:

- Lack of Systematic Learning in Chinese Linguistics: Teachers from cross-disciplinary backgrounds rely on online resources and technology for teaching, lacking the ability to immediately respond to students' questions about Chinese linguistics.

- Inability to Negotiate Training Programs In-Person: Online teachers cannot personally negotiate training programs with Chinese-funded enterprises, leading to standardized and inflexible course materials and training modes that cannot meet personalized needs.

- Time and Space Limitations: Limited interaction time with students and the inability to conduct face-to-face communication create cross-cultural communication challenges between online teachers and students.

## **4. Analysis of the Causes of Role Adaptation Issues for International Chinese Education Teachers**

Through the analysis of three case studies of "Chinese + Vocational Skills" international Chinese education teachers in this research, the role adaptation issues they face mainly stem from the following three aspects:

### *4.1 Complexity of Role Adaptation Due to the Diversity of "Chinese + Vocational Skills" Teacher Roles*

With the implementation of the "Belt and Road" Initiative, the requirements for the roles of "Chinese + Vocational Skills" teachers have diversified. International Chinese education teachers must enrich their role awareness to meet the international community's expectations. Volunteers need to quickly form a certain level of role awareness to successfully fulfill their roles as "Chinese + Vocational Skills" teachers. For most teachers, this requirement can be overwhelming, as their roles are no longer simple but rather multifaceted, complex, and hierarchical. This demands continuous improvement in their awareness of role adaptation issues, posing psychological challenges and practical difficulties for many dispatched Chinese teachers.

### *4.2 Lack of Role Awareness and Misunderstanding Among International Chinese Education Teachers*

Lack of role awareness refers to the deficiency in the existing role awareness of "Chinese + Vocational Skills" international Chinese education teachers needed in the teaching environments of their host countries. When issues arise, these teachers often rely on past experiences to solve problems or fail to recognize the existence of problems immediately. This is primarily related to the pre-departure training

on enhancing their role adaptation awareness. Some teachers do not pay timely attention to the severity and relevance of role adaptation issues from a cross-cultural perspective during training, resulting in a lack of relevant theoretical knowledge and the inability to respond effectively and promptly when role adaptation issues emerge.

#### *4.3 Influence of Personal Characteristics on Role Adaptation of "Chinese + Vocational Skills" International Chinese Education Teachers*

The personal characteristics mentioned in this research mainly refer to four aspects: national background, professional background, personality traits, and career planning. These personal characteristics can influence the role adaptation of "Chinese + Vocational Skills" international Chinese education teachers. The research shows that role adaptation issues can vary greatly depending on the individual, with different teachers showing varying levels of sensitivity to the same role adaptation problem. This highlights the variability of role adaptation issues, which are primarily influenced by the teachers' personal characteristics, such as their different personalities, family backgrounds, professional teaching backgrounds, and career plans, leading to different reactions to the same role adaptation problem.

### **5. Conclusion**

From a national policy support perspective, the "Chinese + Vocational Skills" project should be strongly supported, and the diversity of research perspectives on this project should be encouraged. More scholars should be drawn to focus on the role adaptation issues of frontline teaching staff. Policymaking should consider ensuring role adaptation support for these teachers, establishing a comprehensive role adaptation mechanism so that international Chinese teachers can truly benefit and receive policy support.

Efforts should be accelerated to transform international Chinese education teachers into versatile, practical talents, making them the primary beneficiaries of the "Chinese + Vocational Skills" project. The Center for Language Education and Cooperation needs to adjust the proportion of training content dedicated to role adaptation issues. Before international Chinese teachers are dispatched, relevant theoretical training should be effectively conducted to enhance their role adaptation awareness. Specific role adaptation issues should be analyzed one by one to help teachers handle such problems practically. Different needs for role adaptation should be continually summarized for international Chinese education teachers from various backgrounds, enriching the case library of role adaptation. This case library will aid the development of the international promotion of Chinese language and culture. Continuous collection of role adaptation issues faced by international Chinese teachers after their appointments and increased communication among these teachers will allow the role adaptation experiences of former teachers to benefit current ones.

### Acknowledgements

Supported by: This paper is funded by the research project of Xi'an Fanyi University; "Research on the Role Adaptation Paths of International Chinese Education Teachers in 'Chinese + Vocational Education'"; Project Number: 23B31.

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