

A Study on the Motivation of African Students in China

With African Students Studying in the Universities in Beijing as Examples

Jiang Chunsheng

Beijing Wuzi University

Beijing, China

jiangchunsheng@bwu.edu.cn

Abstract—The purpose of the study on African students' motivation is to understand the students' situations, which include their difficulties and barriers in their life and study, and then make an analysis on the relation among the cultural situation and motivation, and learning outcomes as well, which thus surly provide a help for both students and universities to further the exchanges and cooperation, and finally promote the development of Sino-African relations. The study made a survey which includes 180 questionnaires and 50 interview in 9 universities in Beijing. The survey shows that most of the students are motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. However, intrinsic motivation is much more powerful and effective than extrinsic motivation in students' learning and evolving in the local life in China. There is big difference among the students of different ages. The elder ones have higher autonomous learning ability, therefore most of them can get the better achievements, and easier to get involve in the local life.

Keywords—motivation; intrinsic motivation; extrinsic motivation; cultural communication; learning results

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, Africa has been one of the priorities of China's diplomacy. With the further development of China-Africa relations, the communication and cooperation in the higher educational fields has been improving, which has been an opportunity, for the universities in China, and challenge as well. Large numbers of African students choose to study in China. For those universities who accept African students need to solve not only the issues of education, but also some other issues, like emotional and psychological problems. For African students, the differences in language and culture will exacerbate their adjustment problems. Failed acculturation may lead academic failure, which will lead students to drop out or an extension to complete their studies. The socio-cultural adaptation of African students in China will affect their assessment of China's image after the returning to their home countries.

The study is involved in the adjustment of African students which includes the factors in the cross-culture communication. Many scholars put forward the theory, such as Don Hellriegel, who proposed Six Factors communication process model[1]; Harold Koontz and Heinz Weihrich proposed five elements of communication model[2]; Elliot and Martin. provide knowledge and skills to help students make a successful cultures interact

according to their experience and sensitivity to cross-cultural communication[3].

The relevant research made by Chinese scholars are more concentrated on the areas of management, psychology and sociology. Such as the study from the psychological point of view, (Meng Lei, China University of Mining, 2007); the Studies from the aspect of management, (Yang Jun red, East China Normal University, 2005); the study from sociological aspect (Wang Geng Yu, Zhang Jing, Zhou Wei, Chen Zhen Yu, Renmin University of China, 2007); studies from cross-cultural adaptation (Liyang Jun, 2008), etc.. While the study from African students' motivation is far more than enough.

According to Bandura's theory of motivation, the impact of the learners' motivation is the key factor that will directly affect their learning results, which surly affect the results of cross-cultural communication, especially for the students whose main tasks are study[4]. Therefore it is necessary and urgent to make a study on African students' motivation so as to understand those students' situations, which include their difficulties and barriers in their life and study, and then make an analysis on the relation among the cultural situation and motivation, and learning outcomes as well, which thus surly provide a help for both students and universities to further the exchanges and cooperation, and finally promote the development of Sino-African relations.

The study focus on the African students in the universities in Beijing, which includes 190 questionnaires and 50 interviews to identify the situations of African students studying in Beijing. Through the case study, the paper analyze their motivation and the difficulties and barriers in involving in the local life.

II. THE SITUATION OF AFRICAN STUDENTS STUDYING IN CHINA

A. The development of Sino-Africa relations

Wherever Times is specified, Times Roman or Times New Since the establishment of china in the last century, Africa has been one of the priorities of China's diplomacy. Bloomberg Business Week made a commentary on April 18, 2014: "Chinese the new government of China has been managing give unprecedented attention to strengthen Sino-African economic and political relations. At present, China has established trade areas in more than 50 African

countries and regions , and signed a "bilateral trade agreements" with more than 40 countries.

With the strengthening of Sino-African economic and political cooperation, more African students choose to come to China. The data released by the Ministry of Education shows that the total number of African students studying in China in 2014 has exceeded 41 million, and China will become the largest destination to accept African students by 2020 [5]. See the Fig .1.

continent	Total	Total percentage	Increased number	YOY
Asia	225,490	59.80%	5,682	2.58%
Europe	67,475	17.90 %	5,933	9.64%
Africa	41,677	11.05%	8,318	24.93%
America	36,140	9.58%	-907	-2.45%
Oceania	6,272	1.33 %	1529	32.24%

Figure 1. The Statistics of international Students in China in 2014
(The figures above are excluding Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan regions)

In the figures we can see that the number of African students are increasing a lot, which increased by 24.93 percent, comparing with the last year. The data shows that in the international exchange of scientific and educational material and spiritual culture of human society, international students has not only become an important factor in promoting the internationalization of the regional culture, but also a major cultural transplant media. A good education and exchange of culture will accelerate the process of internationalization of universities and enhance the international image of China.

B. The main problems for African students

With the different cultural background, many African students in China feel a sort of social isolation. It is not so easy for them to make friends with Chinese people, no need to say to make a Chinese girl friend. Some African students feel offended when they are encountered such situations, like being called Black, or Africans since other foreigners can be distinguished clearly from country to country but use collective to as "black" Just because of the self-estimate, some of the students feel relatcant to talk with local people. They choose to live around their folk fellows and speak their own native languages. Some of them can not speak a little Chinese although they have stayed in China for more than two years. There is no need to ask if they can get themselves involved in the local life. For most of time, they feel lonely and this culture shock

made them uncomfortable, and many students cut the courses and finally failed in their program .

III. MOTIVATION OF AFRICAN STUDENTS

According to Maehr and Meyer, "Motivation is a word that is part of the popular culture as few other psychological concepts"[6]. Motivation can be divided into two different theories known as Intrinsic (internal) motivation and Extrinsic (external) motivation. Both of motivation has great impact in their learning results.

A. The impact of extrinsic motivation

Since 1960s, more and more African countries achieved independence. Chinese government provided scholarships to African students. The scholarship can cover their tuition, travel expenses and their expense of living in China. Among the 200 questionnaires, more than 37% students came to China just for the reason. The government provide the scholarship for them and then they choose to study in China.

Besides that, the social environment also has impact. About 24% students said they got the first impression about China and the relatives and friend once studied or worked in China. And with the development of more Chinese manufacturing product in African, more employees with Chinese background are needed. For this reason, they choose to come to China. Bandura once said that "most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: From observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action " [7] This social learning purpose push more African students choose to study in China. In the process of formation, social demand is a major component of their motivation. The cultural background of the family shows a direct factor for the students. Africans also value their families' support, their families and friends' expectations plays an extremely important role. If their families and friends have a good impression on China and tell them their expectations, these African students would have a positive impact on their studying and living in China. If they receive some negative commence from their relatives or friends, they will naturally have a negative impact, thus affecting students' learning motivation. Most of the students in the later interviews prove that.

On the other hand, with the economic cooperation in the two continents, more Chinese enterprises need the employees who knows both African culture and Chinese languages. Therefore some students value objectives. In the learning process, when they get in touch with Chinese, they often encounter Chinese words and terms, which would force them to learn. This will help them to improve their learning motivation.

B. The impact of intrinsic motivation

According to Bandura's theory of motivation, intrinsic motivation includes a scenario motivation, emotional motivation, willpower motivation, goal motivation and so on. intrinsic Motivation plays a very important role in the students' learning process. Bandura pointed that the results of people's behavior is commonly referred to intensify. Emotional motivation of the learner to recognize objects is emotion. It is the attitude of people held experience of

objects. It is a reflection of the relationship between human needs and the objects. For students, the emotions directly affect their motivation to learn and initiate, while the role of emotion in learning is often easily overlooked. Learners' personal experiences, interests, needs, values, attitudes, aspirations and level of external incentives are all closely linked with learning. As learners have big interest, and their sense of discipline is much stronger, they may value to invest a lot of time and effort.

The student's internal needs and learning goals. The learning goals for African students are different, which will affect the students' interest, motivation, attitude and so on. In their learning process, students usually have two requirements: master the language needs and performance requirements. Students have to master the language needs, the main concern for them is to grasp what they have learned. For these students, no matter how many difficulties they may encounter, they would insist on learning initiative to seek the challenge of learning. The goal for these students is excellent academic performance. While for some others, they do not care what they learned, but other people's evaluation. They are not interested in learning, they just want to finish their stay and then go back of their hometown.

C. *The students' personalities*

Bandura hold the opinion that students' motivation is also likely to be effected by the other factors, like the students' own characters. For some students, they have strong eager to challenge themselves. Most of them are task oriented and never fear to fail. On the contrary, some students tend to avoid challenges because they do not want to risk failing. They are slow workers who avoid responsibility, are easily dissuaded from taking part and do not like being assessed [8]. The students with different personalities, hobbies and interests will lead to different learning results. If a student has a strong interest in Chinese culture and also a curiosity in studying in China, it would improve his learning motivation.

The result of analysis on almost 200 questionnaires shows that the elder the students are, the more likely they are task-oriented. To a certain extent, students' age and their educational degree influence the learning motivation, while the students older than 30 may have a stronger will, and students studying for master's degree and Phd will have a better motivation than the younger ones and those for Bachelor's or lower degree. In addition, different personalities' will have the impact of success and failure in learning. For those optimistic and open students, they are tend to take serious effort in their learning process, and strive to obtain better performance, so as to lay a strong foundation for the future study. Conversely, some students are shunned, hiding the difficulties like the plague.

D. *The anxiety level of students and academic achievement*

Anxiety is a normal reaction to certain situations. A small level of anxiety is normal, but severe anxiety can be a serious problem. Academic anxiety can become more detrimental over time. As a student's academic performance suffers, the anxiety level related to certain academic tasks increases [9]. Anxiety affect not only the students' motivation to learn, but also their ability to learn.

If the students can not get a better achievement, they may fell anxious. If this anxiety plagued the students for a long time, they may lose their interest in learning. Therefore the low achieving students will not be concerned about doing better while at school, but they wanted to avoid the situation [10], therefore those students choose to cut the classes at school and be reluctance to get along with local people. They hold a negative opinion on the city they stay and therefore hold the prejudiced of China. When they return back home after they finish their study they will surly spread his prejudiced around his friends and relatives. Research shows that too much anxiety or too less will have an adverse impact on the completion of the tasks. Moderate anxiety on learning is beneficial. Therefore, in the learning process, only appropriate anxiety for students is good for their achievement.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In the international trend of higher education, foreign students education is an important strategy for the development of education. Universities have been in an important position to promote multi-level Sino-Africa relations in the field of communication.

Through the survey we believe that students' success is due to ones internal factors and external factors. Internal factors cover many aspects. The students with higher degree pursue will much easily control their own behavior. In their view, a person's failure is due to lack of effort and improper methods, which does affect the student's perseverance. On the contrary, the failure in the learning will bring some negative commence for Chin, which will influence the deeper Non-government cooperation. The paper investigated African students learning motivation and learning outcomes, which will provide ideas and references to learn and to explore a more systematic theoretical improvement for the quality of education, and promote mutual understanding between different cultures and communication. In addition, the study can also help more Chinese to learn different living habits of African tribes, and understand the connotation of their cultural background, and help Chinese enterprises in Africa understand the local customs so as to promote cooperation and exchanges in various fields.

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