Constructing Training System of Foreign Teachers in Higher Education Under Pespective of Acculturation

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Abstract

Helping foreign teachers rapidly finish acculturation has been important part in administration in higher education. Training for acculturation has been a major approach to solve this issue. Applying interviewing method to interview some foreign teachers in colleges, results indicate that current training is not systematic and some strategies of constructing this training system have been put forward.

Key words: Acculturation; College; Foreign teachers

INTRODUCTION

With level of international in Chinese higher education increasing constantly, group of foreign teachers also has been expanding accordingly. Therefore, increasing employing efficiency of foreign teachers has been a major topic in administration of higher education for foreign teachers. Research and practice have indicated that, foreign teachers have been pressed and anxious about acculturation thereby affecting their working effectively. So helping foreign teachers rapidly adopt to unfamiliar culture and decreasing their pressure of acculturation has been a mission for every college. One of effective and straightforward approach is systematic training for foreign teachers.

1. ACCULTURATION AND ITS IMPACT

1.1 Definition of Acculturation

The first one used word of acculturation is American Bower. He defined acculturation as mentally changing as result of imitation of culture in 1883. Later, anthropologist William John McGee regarded acculturation as actual adjustment between groups. Commonly cited definition is acclaimed by Redfield, Lintion and Herskovits, namely constructed by individuals and two groups of different culture constantly and directly exposing to each other, causing one or both alternation of culture pattern. The anthropologist discussed major issues that are the culture model change when groups of primitive culture contact with groups of modern culture. These changes are embodied in a group together with the symbols, customs, values. Therefore, acculturation is relative to the whole group rather than the individual from perspective of sociology.

Research of W.B. Gundykunst, an expert on cross culture communication, suggested that acculturation is second socialization process. The acculturation is for those who have been completed the transition from the "natural person" to "social man" in a society, which is internalization of basic social behavior, and people have strong emotion and identity on the process and content of the internalization. When a person who has completed the socialization enters into another completely alien cultural context and stays for a long time, "resocialization" or "acculturation " will appear. In the process of "resocialization" or "acculturation", people state to notice new thinking pattern and behavior of hosting country and familiar with rules and sense of value that are accepted by main torrent of hosing country society and meanwhile discard some original culture pattern, being de-acculturation. Visible, acculturation is a process of the resocialization, People try to detect, be familiar with, adopt the cultural elements of the hosting country, and throw away the interaction between the original culture and the society.

Psychologists suppose that acculturation is mental adjusting process of individuals. Despite it was repeated questioning and criticism of later generations. For example, Oberg proposed culture shock concept, a classical delination of mental states of people in changing cultural situations. Because of unfamiliarity about social symbols, individuals began to be deeply anxious. That is to say, people are showing a negative psychological state in the cross culture change. But person will make adjustments to own mental state with the change of time, the individual psychological adjustment process was interpreted by the U-shaped curve hypothesis that was advanced Lysgaard, namely people are in high spirits when they just entering the hosting country's culture, and then gradually low, and later Their emotions will be back to the familiar with the new environment. In addition, Young Yun Kim discussed mental adjusting process under perspective of changing of pressure, a process consisting of two steps forward and one step backward, a spiral living replicating pressure-adjustment-forward. Specifically, it is "a step backward in the stage of stress, in a reduced pressure or time of relaxation. This is a defensive phase. In this stage, the person who adapts new culture will reorganize mode of cognition and emotion, and gather strength to go forward to adapt, try to a new attempt. In addition, Adler also studied people's change of mental process in cross cultural shift, and put forward a five stage model hypothesis, namely contact stage (excited), not unified stage (chaos, confusion, weakness, loneliness, depression), negative stage(to main and self-esteem), self-discipline stage (calm, confident) and independent stage (plenty of love life). It is worth noting that, Ward and colleagues carried out serial longitude research of depression level of visitors under pespective of dealing with pressure. They concluded that visitors had the highest depression in initial cross situation. Although there are contradictions in the conclusion, the above research indicates that acculturation is a dynamic process of individual psychological adjustment.

From a comprehensive perspective, whether it is a group level or individual level, acculturation is through individual psychology and behavior. Therefore, we agree that acculturation is that individuals adjust their mental and behaviors according to changing of cultural situation, and the process of adjusting is influenced by individuals and society, thereby causing complex results. One is mental adjustment, mental adjusting process and results. Second one is social culture adjustment, behavior adjusting process and results.

1.2 Impact of Acculturation

Generally speaking, acculturation is a long process, it is the more difficult and the more complex than other adapting. In the process of adjustment, the individual's psychological and behavior will be caused a certain impact, which will make people have a negative mood, which brings pressure, affect the work efficiency. This is commonly referred to pressure as the acculturation , the bad phenomenon of psychological and physical health often appeared when person was in the process of acculturation , the specific performance is confusion, anxiety, depression, alienation sense, edge, identity confusion, physical or mental symptoms increased etc.. Berry believed that life changing that induces acculturation can, sometimes to be beneficial. Because it offers new development chance for people who are in acculturation and at the same time, brings pressure for them causing problems of mental health. However, there is not a cause-and-effect relationship between acculturation and pressure but a probabilistic relationship. Acculturation should not always cause mental pressure for acculturating people, but pressure is determined by a series of factors. Unhealthy acculturation can be exposed by encountering opposite culture. Thus, when individuals are in unfamiliar culture context, they can be anxious and feeling insecurity by worrying about unconscious but intruding behavior may cause unnecessary trouble. Wink Elman claimed that acculturation not only can affect mental health, but also can influence physical health. Overall, compared with positive side of acculturation, its negative consequences for foreign teachers in colleges can be tremendous due to its possibility and depth. Overall, a person in the new different cultures will appear inappropriate symptoms, such as cognition, emotion control, physical function and mature behavior, social interaction, reality, self-control ability as well as unified etc..

2. CURRENT STATE OF TRAINING SYSTEM FOR CHINESE FOREIGN TEACHERS IN COLLEGE

According to research of Lievens, Harris, Keer and Bisqueret (2003), there are two trends in academic to promote acculturation. The first is by selection, and second one is training for acculturation which is regarded as a main technology to promote foreign staff to acculturate and working efficiency. Many Multi-National Corporation provide cross cultural training to help employees adapting to the life and work of the hosting. Before they go to the hosting country, their cross cultural training can help them improving their awareness of differences between national culture and the hosting country cultural, and tell them what kind of behavior and expression is consistent with the etiquette way of hosting country, it can strengthen the expatriates in the adaptation to the hosting country. They have many differences between traditional training and cross cultural training, traditional training is about the information, skills training, while the latter aims to help expatriates to understand information and to help expatriates culture to change attitude. The goal of cross cultural training is not training expatriates how to behave,

it is to help expatriates understanding differences and similarities of their own culture and the hosting country culture, to help them learn better. Foreign teachers in colleges as being staff from other counties may face the same problem of acculturation as well. So every college needs to pay attention to training for acculturation, helping them adopt Chinese culture as soon as possible and eliminate negative consequences of pressure from acculturation.

Usually a complete training system includes four parts: training course system, training instructor management system, training effect evaluation and training management system. The first three are the three core work of the training system. After examining training system of foreign teachers from twenty colleges in Liaoning Province, the results indicate that cross culture training system is not sound in colleges. There were only three colleges has established training system for training foreign teachers, covering less than 20% of all sample. Besides, some training content are not systematic, Although, nearly all of the colleges have claimed to have clarify teaching requirement and local living customs for foreign teachers by external fair staff, these contents are not fixed, and cannot form a fixed curriculum system. As for training teachers, nearly all of the colleges are carried out by external fair staff, without organizing managers with various working experiences, professional teachers and foreign teachers as faulty. It is also notable that almost no college evaluates and monitor for results of training of foreign teachers. After the management personnel of the University introduced the teaching request, the life custom and so on to the foreign teacher, it is often assumed that the autonomy of its own exploration, they don't care about the training effect.

After examining twenty colleges, colleges that pay attention to construction of training system, training curriculum and faculty as well as systematically training for foreign teachers only consists few of all the colleges. The first cause of this phenomenon is that leaders of schools are not fully aware of the employing of foreign teachers. Many of the schools are taking employing foreign teachers as a mean of attracting students and only care about basic teaching missions being fulfilled by foreign teachers, instead of caring about whether they acculturate or not. The second one is economical consideration. In most of the colleges, foreign teachers are only several to dozens of people. Compared to local teachers, numbers of local teachers are too small. So managers feel it costs unequally to set up a holistic training system. The third on is high currency of foreign teachers. According to our managing policy of employing foreign teachers, many schools employ foreign teachers for one year. After the employing period, it depends whether continue the contract or not. In most of the colleges, according to group survey, the continuing employment ratio is less than 50%. Some of foreign teachers regard employment as a way of traveling to China, after one employment end, they would prefer travelling in the next city, some foreign teachers emphasize high salary, so they constantly change their job for more income. The high currency prevents investing of managers for training foreign teachers, because the foreign staff would disappear before price paid off causing loss of resources.

3. STRATEGIES FOR CONSTRUCTING SYSTEM TRAINING FOR FOREIGN TEACHERS IN COLLEGES

In recent years, the number of foreign teachers is in the sustained growth with the continuous development of the trend of internationalization of higher education, it has become an important part of the connotative development of colleges and universities to increase foreign teachers employ benefit. Therefore, it is an urgent task to set up a cross cultural training system for foreign teachers in colleges and universities, as it can eliminate the adverse effects caused by cross cultural adaptation.

3.1 Establishing Systematic Training System

College that has qualification of employing foreign teachers set up foreign affair department (or international communication colleges) and other foreign management department. So training of foreign teachers is within mission of that department. Accordingly, subject of establishing the training system is also foreign affair management department. The department should set up a typical training section office for training and equip with professional staff with high ability, in charge of managing work of training of foreign teachers.

Training system not only stipulates training managing subject but also assures the range of training. The training range should include training before appointment, and post training. Targets of training contain new employing foreign teachers for training before appointment and continuing employment foreign teachers should attend regular training with new appointed foreign teachers. Meanwhile, fund should be regulated for training and avoid using other purposes.

3.2 Stipulating Holistic Training Content

According to interviewing with foreign teachers and staff of foreign affairs department , contents of training of foreign teacher for acculturation should contains following sections: one is training culture of China and city where the college located, which could satisfy the goal of their teaching in China and inclination of learning Chinese culture. For example, one could invite Chinese teachers report Chinese culture and organize short tour and enhance sensitive learning as well as organize activities in important festivals. The second one is training for

sensitivity of culture and adaptation, increasing empathy ability and paying attention on diversity of Chinese and foreign cultures by discussion. The third one is language training, an essential part of cross-culture communication. The forth one is communication across cultures and dealing with culture conflict training.

The cross culture training of foreign teachers is divided into three stages: the stage of come to colleges and universities, the stage of coming to colleges and universities and the stage of working. Before coming to the colleges and universities, the colleges and universities should try to provide the hosting city and the information of colleges and universities, The management personnel of colleges and universities should tell foreign teachers the web of the colleges and universities or the city , ask them to browse the Internet, foreign teachers can also be through reading books about China or belongs to the city and get the initial impression of the city and the school especially urban environment, historical, cultural, economic, social and other cultural information ,they have roughly understanding, these can lest culture shock phenomenon because that discovery a too big discrepancy between reality and imagination. The colleges and universities should organize the foreign teacher to carry on the training, the training objective is to let foreign teachers familiar with the life, teaching equipment, systems, procedures and methods, it is an important step and the basic framework of life and work before foreign teachers began to work. The training content includes the teaching management system, teaching place and equipment, living facilities, life management system, the entry and exit management system, the rights, obligations and benefits of foreign teachers. When the content involves cultural differences, the management personnel of colleges and universities must be patient explanation, not to explain something, and to explain the purpose and necessity of the rules and regulations, the purpose is to allow foreign teachers to understand and accept. When foreign teacher feel unsatisfactory, the management personnel explain to them with great patience, in line with the attitude of seeking truth from facts, on the one hand to recognize the present situation , while to the foreign teachers to promote the local government to take positive measures and to achieve the results, horizontal and vertical comparison in the form of a positive, to let foreign teachers can't light to their standard to set our problems, but to try to let them stand in our point of view to consider the surrounding environment. Job training is accumulated bit by bit, the management personnel should set up various contents of training for foreign teachers' demand, which requires managers should be good at discovering problems and actively respond.

3.3 Selecting Suitable Training Faculty

The training process before on board for foreign teachers is mainly via email and skyping and other remote internet.

The main purpose is to make foreign teachers familiarize regulation of the school, school culture and culture of the city where the school locates. During this period, foreign teacher manager could fully capable for this training. After being on board, foreign affair department should spend one to two weeks training face-to-face for new employed foreign teachers and also could invite manager of college administration to explain regulation of school and law professionals to explain law and policy for foreign teachers, and invite manager of teaching administration to explain rules and common sense of teaching, and invite foreign teachers who has been working for years to share experiences of acculturation. Training in work is mainly in charge of foreign managing staff who could explain any time when foreign teachers face any kind of problem.

3.4 Evaluation on Result of Training Timely

Relevant department of training should emphasize the feedback of training of foreign teachers and sound training system. The aim of training of foreign teachers is to promote their adaptation to Chinese culture as soon as possible and absorbed into group of school. If the expectation of training could be realized, foreign teachers would be motivated to develop themselves dramatically and it would induce their enthusiasm provided that motivation of training is rooted within foreign teachers themselves. Thus, feedback from training before being on board should be analyzed. And some specific clerk should communicate with foreign teachers regularly, learning about inner need of foreign teachers and make corresponding training blueprint and motivate the enthusiasm of attending training and acculturation of foreign teachers.

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