

WHERE DO I BELONG? A case study of Tanzanian students who returned from China

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the culture shock and reverse culture shock that were experienced by Tanzanian students after being exposed to Chinese cultural environments and how these factors have shaped their expectations in adapting to new life experiences. Since cultural transition is a multifaceted phenomenon affecting different aspects of feelings/emotion (Affective), behavior and cognition, the ABC model of culture shock and reverse culture shock was adopted to conceptualize affective, behavioral and cognitive variables in this research. A sample of 8 Tanzanian returnees from China, was selected purposively, and was guided with structured and semi structured interviews to narrate their life stories concerning their experiences in china and after their sojourn. The data were analyzed qualitatively in light of the themes that emerged.

Language difficulties, anxiety, isolation, surprise, confusion, anger, mental depression, and lack of support were the most echoed experiences in China and after their sojourn. The aforementioned experiences were the indicators of culture shock and reverse culture shock in my study. Apart from the shocks, they were able to add value of their career, acquire new skills and gain new identities. Even after one or more years of their return to Tanzania, and/or their re-entry to China they have neither adapted to their own culture nor the Chinese culture; meaning that their state of belonging is still a puzzle to them.

The findings may enhance our understanding of international educational mobility, particularly on cultural difficulties experienced by international students during their stay abroad and after returning home. Additionally, the findings may be a form of enlightenment for new sojourners, international students' offices in China, and the Tanzanian Government to plan for productive programs which will reduce the transitional challenges.

KEY TERMS: *Culture, Culture shock, Reverse culture shock, Expectations, Returnees*