

# The Integration of Chinese Culture Teaching in High Schools in Brazzaville, Congo: An Exploration from Methods to Curriculum Development

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## Abstract

This study aims to incorporate Chinese culture teaching into Brazzaville high schools' curriculum to enhance China-Congo bilateral relations. Despite progress in Chinese language education there, Chinese culture education has clear shortcomings. Qualitative and exploratory methods were used. Data was collected via interviews with school personnel, student questionnaires, and classroom observations, along with in-depth case analyses of institutions with cultural initiatives. The findings revealed significant challenges: insufficient teacher training in cultural education, a lack of teaching resources, and limited access for students to Chinese culture. However, practical activities like embroidery workshops, kung-fu demonstrations, and costume exhibitions had great effects. They boosted students' interest and deepened their cultural understanding. Integrating such activities into the curriculum is crucial for a more engaging learning experience. Strategic planning, including building a fitting integration framework and providing teacher training, is needed. Based on the results, suggestions for administrators and policymakers were given, stressing more investment in teacher training and resources, and promoting cooperation with Chinese institutions. Future research can assess long-term impacts and explore exchange opportunities. This study endeavors to offer practical strategies to improve Chinese culture teaching quality in Brazzaville high schools.

## Keywords

Chinese Culture Teaching; Curriculum Integration; High Schools in Brazzaville; Intercultural Education; Practical Methods

## INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL), the integration of Chinese culture has become a key issue. Especially in the

context of globalization, the need to strengthen cultural exchanges and enhance intercultural skills is becoming more urgent. Many academic studies have explored this issue, laying an important foundation for our research on Chinese culture teaching in high schools in Brazzaville.

The concept of the "third space" proposed by (KRAMSCH C., 1993)<sup>1</sup> and (BYRAM M., 1997)<sup>2</sup> in his intercultural competence model, both emphasize the importance of interaction between learners and the target language culture, as well as the necessity of developing intercultural skills. In the educational environment of Brazzaville, these theories are of special significance. They clarify that students in Brazzaville need a specific space to deeply understand Chinese culture while coordinating their own cultural identities and mastering Chinese language knowledge. However, budget constraints and insufficient teacher training in high schools in Brazzaville may hinder the effective construction of the "third space" and the development of intercultural skills.

In addition to these practical challenges in the implementation aspect, from a theoretical perspective, (Halliday, 1978)<sup>3</sup> systemic - functional linguistics closely links language with the sociocultural context. This theory is of great significance for Chinese language teaching because Chinese language expressions are deeply rooted in specific cultural practices.

Unfortunately, teachers in Brazzaville often focus more on the teaching of grammar and vocabulary in the teaching process and find it difficult to integrate rich cultural connotations into the curriculum, thus limiting students' understanding of the internal connection between language and Chinese culture.

张占一 (1984)<sup>4</sup> distinguished between social culture and knowledge culture, and (祖晓梅, 2023)<sup>5</sup> emphasized the difference between declarative cultural knowledge and procedural cultural knowledge. These theoretical distinctions indicate that Chinese culture teaching should focus on balance, covering both the cultural elements necessary for practical communication and guiding students to form a broad understanding of culture. (Cadd, 1994)<sup>6</sup> also warned about the disadvantages of an ethnocentric teaching

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<sup>1</sup> KRAMSCH C. (1993). *Context and Culture in language Teaching*. Oxford UP. Print.

<sup>2</sup> BYRAM M. (1997). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence* (Multilingual Matters).

<sup>3</sup> Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*. Edward Arnold.

<sup>4</sup> 张占一. (1984). 汉语个别教学及其教材. 语言教学与研究, 3, 57-67.

<sup>5</sup> 祖晓梅. (2023). 文化教学的新理念和新思路——《国际中文教育用中国文化国情教学参考框架》解读. 语言教学与研究, 3, 26-35.

<sup>6</sup> Cadd, M. (1994). An Attempt to Reduce Ethnocentrism in the Foreign Language Classroom. *Foreign Language Annals*, 27(2), 143-160. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.1994.tb01198.x>

approach and highlighted the importance of adapting teaching content to foreign learners. In the educational context of Brazzaville, these concepts provide key guidance for Chinese culture teaching. However, given the specific difficulties in the local education system, more efforts are still needed to effectively put them into practice.

In terms of teaching methods, scholars have proposed various strategies. The immersive and contextualized teaching method inspired by (Krashen, 1982)<sup>7</sup> aims to immerse learners in a real - life cultural environment. Although this method helps students gain a real - life experience of Chinese culture, due to financial and logistical constraints in high schools in Brazzaville, it is difficult for students to achieve immersive learning through study trips or interactions with native speakers. However, the rational use of multimedia resources is expected to make up for this deficiency to a certain extent.

Teaching Chinese culture in Brazzaville is a complex but crucial task. The way we classify culture and design Chinese textbooks has a direct impact on how students perceive and understand this rich and diverse culture. It is essential that we constantly evaluate and refine these aspects to ensure a better learning experience. However, as (赵金铭, 2015)<sup>8</sup> has pointed out, there are indeed problems such as the rigidity of cultural classification and the shortcomings of Chinese textbooks. These criticisms are relevant and underscore the urgent need to develop more appropriate teaching methods and resources. Only in this way can we present students in Brazzaville with a true, comprehensive, and nuanced view of Chinese culture and prevent them from being misled by stereotypes.

Furthermore, language teaching specialists, such as (Pulverness, 2004)<sup>9</sup>, have highlighted the complex relationship between culture and language. In fact, it is widely recognized that when the study of the associated culture is neglected in second language (L2) teaching, the teaching process becomes incomplete and imprecise. For L2 learners, especially those in high schools in Brazzaville, learning a language can seem pointless if they do not know the people who speak that language and the country where it is spoken. It is clear that mastering a new language involves much more than simply mastering grammar and vocabulary.

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<sup>7</sup> Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Pergamon Press.

<sup>8</sup> 赵金铭. (2015). 汉语国际教育硕士专业学位课程与教材研究. 国际汉语教育, 1, 3-9+198.

<sup>9</sup> Pulverness, A. (2004). *Here and There: Issues in Materials Development for Intercultural Learning*.

Similarly, (Bada, 2000)<sup>10</sup> posits that "the need for cultural comprehension is crucial in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. This is because most language learners, who have had limited exposure to the cultural elements of the target society, often face significant challenges in communicating effectively with native speakers." This rings especially true for high school students in Brazzaville. Without a proper understanding of Chinese culture, they may struggle to fathom the profound meanings embedded in language expressions, cultural customs, and communication contexts. This can easily lead to misunderstandings during interactions with native Chinese speakers.

Moreover, currently, the culture of the second language is considered an interdisciplinary core component in numerous second - language curricula and textbooks (Savignon S. J. & Sysoyev, 2002)<sup>11</sup>. In the context of Chinese language teaching in Congolese and African high schools, integrating aspects of Chinese tradition, art, cuisine, and philosophy into the curriculum is essential. This integration not only enhances students' language comprehension but also fosters their cross - cultural skills.

(Cramer, 2014)<sup>12</sup> has noted that there is no such thing as human nature divorced from culture. When learning a second language, learners, in a sense, are attempting to understand the essence of other cultures. If, as McDevitt argues, human nature is intricately linked to culture, then the study of an L2 necessarily involves the exploration of its related culture. For high school students in Brazzaville, learning Chinese implies delving into Chinese culture, values, customs, and history. Only by grasping these cultural aspects can students truly master the Chinese language and develop effective intercultural communication skills.

This has practical implications for Chinese language teaching in Brazzaville high schools. Teachers should receive training not only in Chinese linguistics but also in Chinese culture. They need to be capable of seamlessly integrating cultural elements into their lessons. Textbooks should be enriched with examples, stories, and anecdotes from Chinese culture to pique students' interest and assist them in better understanding the language within its cultural context. Additionally, schools should promote cultural activities such as Chinese cooking workshops, Chinese art exhibitions, or Kung Fu demonstrations. These activities provide students with tangible cultural experiences and deepen their understanding of Chinese culture.

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<sup>10</sup> Bada, E. (2000). Culture in ELT. *Journal of Cukurova University Social Sciences Institute*, 6, 100–110.

<sup>11</sup> Savignon S. J. & Sysoyev, P. V. (2002). Sociocultural strategies for a dialogue of cultures. *Modern Language Journal*.

<sup>12</sup> Cramer, J. & M. Michael. (2014). Ethnographic Journalism. . *Qualitative Research in Journalism: Taking It to the Streets*, 10.

In such a complex academic and practical context, although existing theories and methods have certain advantages, they need to be adjusted according to the actual situation in Brazzaville. The significance of this study is self-evident. It aims to deeply analyze the current situation of Chinese culture teaching in high schools in Brazzaville and attempt to answer a series of key questions, such as the current presentation of teaching, the impact of existing cultural activities on students' learning motivation and cultural understanding, the difficulties in curriculum integration, and possible improvement solutions. By combining the results of academic research with the actual education situation in Brazzaville, this study hopes to provide valuable references for school leaders, teachers, and all those in the Brazzaville education community who are concerned about the integration of Chinese culture courses. At the same time, it also contributes to the academic research in this field.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research adopts qualitative and exploratory research methods, which help to deeply explore the experiences, concepts, and practices of relevant personnel involved in Chinese culture teaching, and thus better understand this complex educational phenomenon.

In terms of sample selection, the research covers different participant groups. Specifically, 40 students from 3 different schools in Brazzaville participated in the study. These students are all taking Chinese language courses and represent different academic levels and socioeconomic backgrounds. Their views will provide rich perspectives for us to understand the attitudes of young people in Brazzaville towards Chinese culture teaching.

In addition, 10 Chinese language teachers were also included in the sample. These professionals have direct teaching experience in general education high schools in Brazzaville and can share their teaching methods, the difficulties they encounter when integrating Chinese culture into the curriculum, and their suggestions for improving teaching integration.

At the same time, 10 administrative staff from the same batch of middle schools were recruited. They play a key role in managing the budgets, logistics, and teaching affairs related to Chinese language teaching and Chinese culture, and can provide valuable information about the limitations and opportunities faced by schools in promoting the integration of Chinese culture into the curriculum.

In terms of data collection, the research uses multiple methods. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted. For teachers, the interview

content covered their initial and continuous education in Chinese culture, the teaching strategies they used in the curriculum, and the obstacles they encountered in the teaching process. For administrators, the interviews focused on financial situations, existing partnerships with Chinese institutions or other external participants, and their views on the importance of cultural integration in the curriculum. Students were asked to share their interest in Chinese culture, their current understanding of various aspects of Chinese culture, and their experiences of cultural activities they had participated in. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants and then transcribed for further analysis.

Questionnaires were also organized. Structured questionnaires were distributed to students. The questionnaires included multiple-choice questions and Likert-scale questions (Likert, 1932)<sup>13</sup> to assess students' agreement or satisfaction levels, as well as open - ended questions to collect more detailed feedback. The questionnaire content covered students' interest in Chinese culture, their existing knowledge of different fields of Chinese culture (such as cooking, martial arts, literature, etc.), their views on the importance of integrating Chinese culture into the curriculum, and their suggestions for practical cultural activities to be held in high schools. The questionnaires were distributed in Chinese language classes on - site to encourage maximum participation.

In addition, researchers conducted field observations of Chinese language classrooms in relevant middle schools, focusing on the practical situation of Chinese culture teaching, including the time spent on Chinese culture teaching in the classroom, the methods used by teachers to display cultural elements, students' responses, and the interactions between teachers and students around cultural themes. During the observation process, researchers were cautious to avoid affecting the normal operation of the class, and the observation results were recorded in detail in field notes.

The Confucius Institute in Brazzaville became the key object of the case - study method in this research. Researchers studied in detail its teaching plans related to Chinese culture, including how various aspects of Chinese culture are organized in the curriculum. At the same time, cultural activities regularly held by the Confucius Institute, such as Chinese Culture Day, Chinese cooking workshops, Taijiquan demonstration courses, and calligraphy activities, were observed and analyzed. Researchers also interviewed the teachers of the Confucius Institute to understand their views on Chinese culture teaching and had discussions with the participants of cultural activities

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<sup>13</sup> Likert, R. (1932). A technique for the measurement of attitudes. . Archives of Psychology, 5-55.

to collect their personal experiences and the impact of these activities on their understanding of Chinese culture.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the research results, this study adopted the data triangulation method, that is, comparing and verifying the information collected through interviews, surveys, and field observations. In addition, secondary data such as official reports on bilingual or intercultural education in Brazzaville were also collected to enhance the depth and breadth of the analysis.

It should be noted that this research method has certain limitations. The sample is mainly concentrated in high schools in Brazzaville, which may affect the universality of the research results across the whole of Brazzaville. This limitation has been fully considered when analyzing the results and drawing conclusions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Current Situation of Chinese Culture Education in Brazzaville**

#### ***The Development of Cultural Activities***

At present, in Brazzaville, most of the cultural activities related to Chinese language teaching are carried out within the framework of the Confucius Institute. Through interviews with students taking Chinese language courses in different institutions, it was found that some students said that only in the Confucius Institute they could participate in activities such as lectures on ancient Chinese literature, calligraphy demonstrations, or Chinese cooking workshops. These students considered these activities to be of great value but also regretted the lack of such activities in their own public high schools.

In contrast, public high schools in Brazzaville are relatively backward in carrying out Chinese - related cultural activities. After field visits to many public high schools, it was found that schools rarely hold special Chinese culture days or regularly organize Chinese culture seminars. A Chinese language teacher in a public middle school in Brazzaville pointed out that budget constraints and the lack of cooperation with local Chinese institutions make it very difficult to hold such activities. In addition, the insufficient training of teachers in Chinese culture leads to a lack of methods and experience in organizing and carrying out cultural activities.

#### ***Analysis of the Causes of the Current Situation***

There are many reasons why public high schools find it difficult to organize Chinese - related cultural activities. First, budget constraints are the main

restrictive factor. The funds allocated to Chinese language teaching are usually limited and need to be used for paying teachers' salaries, purchasing Chinese language books, and other basic teaching materials. For example, to hold a Chinese cooking workshop, it is necessary to invest in specific cooking utensils, fresh ingredients, and perhaps even invite Chinese chefs for demonstrations. Taijiquan or calligraphy demonstrations also require the purchase of corresponding costumes, writing brushes, and ink.

Second, the lack of cooperation with Chinese institutions or other external participants also seriously affects the development of cultural activities. When high schools organize high - quality cultural activities, they need to rely on external forces, such as inviting Chinese experts to give lectures, demonstrations, or hold seminars. They also need financial partnerships to obtain the necessary material resources. Without such cooperation, it is difficult for schools to carry out cultural activities independently.

Furthermore, the insufficient training of teachers in Chinese culture is also an important issue. Although teachers have received training in Chinese language teaching, they have relatively little training in cultural teaching. This makes it difficult for them to organize and host cultural seminars because they have limited knowledge of the practical methods, traditions, and concepts of Chinese culture.

### ***The Impact on Students***

This situation has a multi-faceted negative impact on students. First, students' enthusiasm for learning Chinese has been greatly reduced. Since they cannot fully experience the cultural charm related to the language during the learning process, Chinese language courses may seem monotonous and abstract to them. Their learning motivation and participation decline, and they are more likely to give up Chinese language courses. As argued by (Gardner, 1985)<sup>14</sup>, learners' motivation for the acquisition of a second language is frequently intertwined with their attitudes towards the culture affiliated with that particular language. Specifically, a favorable attitude and a receptive disposition towards the target culture tend to facilitate and enhance the process of language learning. Conversely, any form of resistance to cultural integration on the part of the learners can pose a significant hindrance to their language learning endeavors.

Second, students' cultural understanding is limited. Their understanding of Chinese culture often remains at the level of textbook descriptions, online or off - campus images. Their understanding of Chinese customs, values,

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<sup>14</sup> Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation*.



and traditions is rather stereotypical and one - sided. This may cause obstacles when they communicate with Chinese people in the future and make it difficult for them to correctly understand Chinese - related cultural works, media information, or cultural events.

Finally, this situation may also affect the perception of Chinese culture in the society of Brazzaville. As pointed out by Gorski, it is crucial for teachers to develop their cultural competence to avoid inconsistencies and biases (Gorski, 2011)<sup>15</sup>. As future leaders and active participants in society, if students have limited knowledge of Chinese culture, they may spread misunderstandings or biases in society, thus damaging the bilateral relations between China and Congo in the fields of culture, economy, and diplomacy. After all, good mutual understanding is based on in-depth understanding and appreciation of each other's cultures.

In summary, the current Chinese culture education in high schools in Brazzaville is characterized by the concentration of cultural activities in the Confucius Institute and the lack of such activities in public high schools, which brings many challenges and negative impacts to students and society. Therefore, it is urgent to seek solutions to improve this situation and promote the better integration of Chinese culture into the curriculum of public high schools.

### **The Impact of Practical Cultural Activities**

#### ***Improving Students' Enthusiasm and Participation***

Practical cultural activities have a significant promoting effect on students' enthusiasm and engagement in learning Chinese and exploring Chinese culture. Compared with theoretical classroom teaching, practical activities provide a more concrete and interesting perspective for cultural learning, making it easier for students to develop an interest.

Take the Chinese cooking workshop as an example. During the participation process, students need to understand Chinese terms related to ingredients, cooking steps, and dish descriptions, which stimulates their motivation to learn and use Chinese in practical situations. Relevant research shows that the direct interaction between culture and language can effectively enhance students' participation. In a survey of 40 students, nearly 70% of the students said that practical cultural activities had enhanced their enthusiasm for participating in Chinese language courses.

Mr. Maxim, a student, testified vividly in one of our interviews. After

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<sup>15</sup> Gorski, P. C. (2011). Unlearning deficit ideology and the scornful gaze: Thoughts on authenticating the class discourse in education. *Counterparts*, 152-173.

participating in a Chinese cooking workshop held by the Confucius Institute, he said, "I have always loved cooking, but I never expected that Chinese cooking would inspire me to learn Chinese. Now, I look forward to every Chinese language class, hoping to learn more new words that I can use in my next cooking experience." His experience fully demonstrates how practical cultural activities can effectively change students' attitudes towards language learning.

Similarly, Taijiquan demonstrations and calligraphy workshops provide students with unique opportunities to immerse themselves in specific aspects of Chinese culture. Students are attracted by the beauty of Taijiquan movements and the artistic charm of calligraphy characters, which inspires them to further explore Chinese culture and deepen their study of the Chinese language to better understand its subtleties.

### ***Enhancing Cultural Understanding***

The promoting effect of practical cultural activities on students' cultural understanding cannot be ignored. These activities help students break through the stereotypical descriptions of Chinese culture in textbooks and the media and guide them to deeply understand the connotation of Chinese culture.

The Chinese cooking workshop is a typical example. Through participating in cooking practices, students learn that Chinese cuisine is not just a set of recipes but is deeply rooted in family traditions, religious beliefs, and cultural values that have evolved over centuries. They realize that the selection of ingredients, cooking methods, and the presentation of dishes are influenced by factors such as seasons, regions, and festivals, thus gaining a new understanding of the complexity of Chinese culture.

Taijiquan demonstrations and calligraphy workshops also play an important role in enhancing students' cultural understanding. For example, Taijiquan exposes students to Chinese philosophical concepts such as the balance between Yin and Yang, concentration, and fluidity. They begin to realize that Chinese martial arts are an expression of Chinese thought and culture. In calligraphy learning, students experience the artistic value of Chinese writing. It is not only a communication tool but also reflects personal personality and cultural accomplishment. Students learn to appreciate the subtleties of Chinese characters, and the aesthetic values associated with them.

### ***Development of Cross - Field Skills***

In addition to stimulating learning motivation and enhancing cultural

understanding, practical cultural activities also help to cultivate students' multiple cross - field skills.

In a Chinese cooking workshop, students need to work in teams to prepare dishes. In this process, they learn to assign tasks, communicate effectively to follow the recipe requirements, and solve problems that may arise during cooking, thus exercising their cooperation, leadership, and problem-solving abilities. These skills are of great value in students' future careers and personal lives.

As part of a Taijiquan demonstration activity, students need to concentrate and repeatedly train to imitate precise movements. This helps to improve their concentration, body control ability, and ability to follow precise instructions. This discipline and focus can be transferred to other areas of life, such as learning or sports activities.

Calligraphy workshops encourage students' creativity while requiring them to maintain accuracy in the writing process. Students can express themselves artistically by writing Chinese characters while following the rules of calligraphy art. They learn to strike a balance between creativity and technical norms, which is of great significance for the development of their artistic skills.

In conclusion, practical cultural activities have a positive and multi - dimensional impact on students. They not only enhance students' motivation and engagement in learning Chinese but also improve their cultural understanding and promote the development of cross - field skills. Therefore, practical cultural activities are key factors in promoting the better integration of Chinese culture teaching into the curriculum of middle schools in Brazzaville and are worthy of further promotion and integration into daily teaching.

## **Integration into the Curriculum**

### ***Problems and Difficulties***

Integrating practical cultural activities into the curriculum of public high schools in Brazzaville faces many challenges. Tight budgets are the primary problem. Educational funds are limited and need to be allocated to multiple areas, resulting in very few resources available for cultural activities related to Chinese culture. For example, to hold a Chinese cooking workshop, not only are specific kitchen utensils, spices, and fresh ingredients required, but also a suitable venue for dish preparation. These are often difficult to meet in public high schools.

Teacher training is also a crucial issue. Most Chinese language teachers

have received language - oriented training and have little understanding of various aspects of Chinese culture. This makes it difficult for them to organize and guide cultural activities because they not only need to teach relevant techniques but also explain the underlying cultural concepts, which requires specific training that is often lacking in the local education system.

In addition, there are deficiencies in logistical support. The classrooms in public high schools in Brazzaville are usually designed for traditional courses and are not suitable for hosting activities such as martial arts demonstrations or calligraphy workshops. The lack of computer equipment and stable Internet connection also severely limits the use of audio - visual courses or online resources, making it more difficult to present cultural elements in an interactive and engaging way to students.

### ***Potential Benefits***

Despite these difficulties, integrating practical cultural activities into the curriculum still has many potential benefits. First, it can significantly stimulate students' motivation to learn Chinese. By participating in Chinese cooking workshops, students can experience Chinese cooking in a practical way, taste the food, and learn relevant Chinese terms, thus developing a more direct and specific interest in the Chinese language and becoming more actively involved in Chinese language courses.

Martial arts demonstrations allow students to experience the fascinating aspects of Chinese culture. They not only learn physical movements but also understand related philosophical concepts such as the balance between Yin and Yang, discipline, and concentration. This prompts them to deepen their understanding of Chinese culture and language to be able to discuss and write about these topics.

Calligraphy competitions encourage students to be creative and master Chinese calligraphy skills. While writing Chinese characters, students can not only express themselves artistically but also learn writing techniques and appreciate the aesthetic value. At the same time, they develop qualities such as accuracy and patience, which are helpful for their progress in other fields of study.

Finally, these practical cultural activities contribute to creating a cultural exchange atmosphere in schools. Students could share their experiences, work together, and discover the differences and similarities between Chinese culture and the culture of Brazzaville, thus enhancing their open - mindedness and tolerance towards different cultures.

### ***Specific Implementation Suggestions***

#### ***Innovative use of Existing Spaces***

Although public high schools in Brazzaville usually do not have dedicated cultural activity rooms, existing spaces can be used innovatively. The large courtyard of the school can be transformed into a venue for Chinese cultural activities. On special Chinese cultural festivals, it can become the activity center for students.

When holding a Chinese cooking workshop, tables can be set up in the courtyard, and portable stoves can be installed to facilitate students to prepare dishes in groups. Teachers can arrange preparatory courses in advance to explain cooking recipes and related terms in Chinese. At the same time, daily utensils such as plates, spoons, and bowls can be used to show different Chinese kitchen utensils. After students finish making the dishes, they can introduce their prepared dishes in Chinese and share their understanding of Chinese cooking culture.

For martial arts demonstration activities, the open space of the large courtyard provides sufficient room for movement. Teachers can invite local martial arts coaches or students with martial arts knowledge to demonstrate various postures and movement combinations. They can also use wooden boards or improvised sticks to simulate traditional Chinese weapons. Students can try to reproduce the movements while learning the relevant Chinese terms and can write short texts in Chinese to describe their experiences and their understanding of martial arts philosophical concepts.

When holding a calligraphy competition, a writing area can be set up in a corner of the courtyard with protective measures to avoid external interference. Provide students with writing brushes, ink, and calligraphy paper for creation. Teachers can display famous calligraphy works, explain Chinese character writing techniques, and then students' works can be exhibited in an exhibition held in the courtyard. They need to explain the inspiration for their works and what they are trying to represent in Chinese.

#### ***Alternative Teaching Resources***

In the absence of new technologies such as audio - visual courses or Internet access, it is crucial to make full use of alternative educational resources. Teachers can create practical handmade textbooks, in which they copy pictures of Chinese dishes, martial arts movements, or Chinese calligraphy characters and attach corresponding Chinese explanations. At the same time, information can be extracted from ancient Chinese - related books in the school or local libraries and adapted for use in teaching courses.

Communication with members of the local Chinese community is also an effective way to obtain resources. Teachers can invite residents of the Chinese community to share their experiences in cooking, martial arts, or calligraphy. The Chinese cultural items, family recipes, or cultural stories they bring can enable students to experience Chinese culture more vividly.

In addition, Chinese art works can be copied onto paper or display boards and exhibited in classrooms or the school courtyard. Teachers can use these works to explain Chinese art and culture concepts, as well as relevant professional terms. Then, students can be encouraged to create their own works using the basic materials provided by the school.

### ***Teacher Training***

One significant obstacle lies in the scarcity of competent Chinese teachers. These teachers should possess proficiency in the Chinese language as well as the necessary teaching skills to instruct non-native speakers effectively. Despite the rising demand for Chinese education, there is a notable lack of experienced instructors. Such a shortage of qualified teachers not only impairs the quality of education but also undermines the capacity to fulfill the ever-expanding need for Chinese teaching (郭鹏., 2012)<sup>16</sup> and (Lu, 2019)<sup>17</sup>.

When teaching Chinese as a foreign language, it demands serious and professional teaching skills. Trainers must be proficient in various teaching methods and means so as to effectively confront the challenges that arise during second language acquisition. This entails having a good understanding of the different stages of language development, being familiar with effective teaching strategies, and possessing the ability to adapt teaching in line with individual learning styles (崔希亮, 2018; 李泉, 2009)<sup>18</sup>.

The absence of professional knowledge within this field will have an impact on the effectiveness of language training (*The Acquisition of Chinese as a First and Second Language*, 2020). In the case of most Congolese teachers, since the majority of them haven't received this kind of education, they typically possess few or no relevant skills. As a result, this situation acts as an obstacle to improving the quality of teaching.

To improve teachers' ability to organize and guide cultural activities, practical training is needed. Schools can organize teachers to participate in

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<sup>16</sup> 郭鹏. (2012). 关于海外本土汉语教师培养问题的思考. 国际汉语教育, 24–26.

<sup>17</sup> Lu, Y. , Z. Y. , & L. S. (2019). Mandarin Chinese teachers across borders: challenges and needs for professional development. *International Journal of Chinese Language Education*, 6.

<sup>18</sup> 崔希亮. (2018). 汉语国际教育的若干问题. . 语言教学与研究, 01, 1–7.

Chinese cooking workshops organized by Chinese professional chefs or people familiar with local Chinese cooking, allowing teachers to learn basic recipes, cooking techniques, and relevant Chinese terms.

Cooperate with local martial arts masters to hold martial arts training courses. Teachers can learn the basic principles, movements, and teaching methods for students in the courses and deeply understand the cultural and philosophical connotations behind martial arts to better teach students.

Hold calligraphy workshops to help teachers master Chinese calligraphy skills, learn to use writing brushes, practice writing Chinese characters, and appreciate the aesthetic value of calligraphy. Teachers can apply the skills they have learned to teaching and encourage students to create calligraphy works.

### ***Activity Evaluation and Monitoring***

To ensure that practical cultural activities have a real impact on students, it is essential to establish an effective evaluation and monitoring system.

For Chinese cooking workshops, the evaluation content can include students' mastery of Chinese cooking terms, their ability to follow recipes, teamwork, and the quality of the prepared dishes. Students may be required to write a short paragraph in Chinese describing the dishes and their cultural backgrounds, which will also be considered in the evaluation.

In martial arts demonstration activities, the evaluation can cover students' ability to perform actions accurately, their understanding of relevant Chinese terms, and their ability to explain martial arts philosophical concepts verbally or in writing.

For calligraphy competitions, students' works are evaluated based on their mastery of Chinese character writing, artistic creativity, and their ability to explain the inspiration and techniques used in Chinese.

By regularly communicating with students and collecting their feedback on activities, teachers can promptly understand students' learning experiences. At the same time, observing students' enthusiasm for learning Chinese, classroom participation, and changes in their interest in Chinese culture can help continuously optimize teaching activities.

In conclusion, although there are difficulties in integrating practical cultural activities into the curriculum of public high schools in Brazzaville, it is possible to find specific solutions to overcome these obstacles. By innovatively using existing spaces, exploring alternative teaching resources, strengthening teacher training, and establishing a reasonable evaluation and monitoring system, these activities are expected to become key factors in

improving the quality of Chinese culture teaching and providing students with a rich and immersive educational experience.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **The Current Situation of Chinese Culture Education in Brazzaville**

#### ***The Development of Cultural Activities***

At present, in Brazzaville, most of the cultural activities related to Chinese language teaching are carried out within the framework of the Confucius Institute. Through interviews with students taking Chinese language courses in different institutions, it was found that some students said that only in the Confucius Institute they could participate in activities such as lectures on ancient Chinese literature, calligraphy demonstrations, or Chinese cooking workshops. These students considered these activities to be of great value but also regretted the lack of such activities in their own public high schools.

In contrast, public high schools in Brazzaville are relatively backward in carrying out Chinese - related cultural activities. After field visits to many public high schools, it was found that schools rarely hold special Chinese culture days or regularly organize Chinese culture seminars. A Chinese language teacher in a public middle school in Brazzaville pointed out that budget constraints and the lack of cooperation with local Chinese institutions make it very difficult to hold such activities. In addition, the insufficient training of teachers in Chinese culture leads to a lack of methods and experience in organizing and carrying out cultural activities.

#### ***Analysis of the Causes of the Current Situation***

There are many reasons why public high schools find it difficult to organize Chinese - related cultural activities. First, budget constraints are the main restrictive factor. The funds allocated to Chinese language teaching are usually limited and need to be used for paying teachers' salaries, purchasing Chinese language books, and other basic teaching materials. For example, to hold a Chinese cooking workshop, it is necessary to invest in specific cooking utensils, fresh ingredients, and perhaps even invite Chinese chefs for demonstrations. Taijiquan or calligraphy demonstrations also require the purchase of corresponding costumes, writing brushes, and ink.

Second, the lack of cooperation with Chinese institutions or other external participants also seriously affects the development of cultural activities. When high schools organize high - quality cultural activities, they need to rely on external forces, such as inviting Chinese experts to give lectures,



demonstrations, or hold seminars. They also need financial partnerships to obtain the necessary material resources. Without such cooperation, it is difficult for schools to carry out cultural activities independently.

Furthermore, the insufficient training of teachers in Chinese culture is also an important issue. Although teachers have received training in Chinese language teaching, they have relatively little training in cultural teaching. This makes it difficult for them to organize and host cultural seminars because they have limited knowledge of the practical methods, traditions, and concepts of Chinese culture.

### ***The Impact on Students***

This situation has a multi-faceted negative impact on students. First, students' enthusiasm for learning Chinese has been greatly reduced. Since they cannot fully experience the cultural charm related to the language during the learning process, Chinese language courses may seem monotonous and abstract to them. Their learning motivation and participation decline, and they are more likely to give up Chinese language courses. As argued by (Gardner, 1985)<sup>19</sup>, learners' motivation for the acquisition of a second language is frequently intertwined with their attitudes towards the culture affiliated with that particular language. Specifically, a favorable attitude and a receptive disposition towards the target culture tend to facilitate and enhance the process of language learning. Conversely, any form of resistance to cultural integration on the part of the learners can pose a significant hindrance to their language learning endeavors.

Second, students' cultural understanding is limited. Their understanding of Chinese culture often remains at the level of textbook descriptions, online or off - campus images. Their understanding of Chinese customs, values, and traditions is rather stereotypical and one - sided. This may cause obstacles when they communicate with Chinese people in the future and make it difficult for them to correctly understand Chinese - related cultural works, media information, or cultural events.

Finally, this situation may also affect the perception of Chinese culture in the society of Brazzaville. As pointed out by Gorski, it is crucial for teachers to develop their cultural competence to avoid inconsistencies and biases (Gorski, 2011)<sup>20</sup>. As future leaders and active participants in society, if students have limited knowledge of Chinese culture, they may spread

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<sup>19</sup> Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation*.

<sup>20</sup> Gorski, P. C. (2011). Unlearning deficit ideology and the scornful gaze: Thoughts on authenticating the class discourse in education. *Counterparts*, 152-173.

misunderstandings or biases in society, thus damaging the bilateral relations between China and Congo in the fields of culture, economy, and diplomacy. After all, good mutual understanding is based on in-depth understanding and appreciation of each other's cultures.

In summary, the current Chinese culture education in high schools in Brazzaville is characterized by the concentration of cultural activities in the Confucius Institute and the lack of such activities in public high schools, which brings many challenges and negative impacts to students and society. Therefore, it is urgent to seek solutions to improve this situation and promote the better integration of Chinese culture into the curriculum of public high schools.

### **The Impact of Practical Cultural Activities**

#### ***Improving Students' Enthusiasm and Participation***

Practical cultural activities have a significant promoting effect on students' enthusiasm and engagement in learning Chinese and exploring Chinese culture. Compared with theoretical classroom teaching, practical activities provide a more concrete and interesting perspective for cultural learning, making it easier for students to develop an interest.

Take the Chinese cooking workshop as an example. During the participation process, students need to understand Chinese terms related to ingredients, cooking steps, and dish descriptions, which stimulates their motivation to learn and use Chinese in practical situations. Relevant research shows that the direct interaction between culture and language can effectively enhance students' participation. In a survey of 40 students, nearly 70% of the students said that practical cultural activities had enhanced their enthusiasm for participating in Chinese language courses.

Mr. Maxim, a student, testified vividly in one of our interviews. After participating in a Chinese cooking workshop held by the Confucius Institute, he said, "I have always loved cooking, but I never expected that Chinese cooking would inspire me to learn Chinese. Now, I look forward to every Chinese language class, hoping to learn more new words that I can use in my next cooking experience." His experience fully demonstrates how practical cultural activities can effectively change students' attitudes towards language learning.

Similarly, Taijiquan demonstrations and calligraphy workshops provide students with unique opportunities to immerse themselves in specific aspects of Chinese culture. Students are attracted by the beauty of Taijiquan movements and the artistic charm of calligraphy characters, which inspires

them to further explore Chinese culture and deepen their study of the Chinese language to better understand its subtleties.

### ***Enhancing Cultural Understanding***

The promoting effect of practical cultural activities on students' cultural understanding cannot be ignored. These activities help students break through the stereotypical descriptions of Chinese culture in textbooks and the media and guide them to deeply understand the connotation of Chinese culture.

The Chinese cooking workshop is a typical example. Through participating in cooking practices, students learn that Chinese cuisine is not just a set of recipes but is deeply rooted in family traditions, religious beliefs, and cultural values that have evolved over centuries. They realize that the selection of ingredients, cooking methods, and the presentation of dishes are influenced by factors such as seasons, regions, and festivals, thus gaining a new understanding of the complexity of Chinese culture.

Taijiquan demonstrations and calligraphy workshops also play an important role in enhancing students' cultural understanding. For example, Taijiquan exposes students to Chinese philosophical concepts such as the balance between Yin and Yang, concentration, and fluidity. They begin to realize that Chinese martial arts are an expression of Chinese thought and culture. In calligraphy learning, students experience the artistic value of Chinese writing. It is not only a communication tool but also reflects personal personality and cultural accomplishment. Students learn to appreciate the subtleties of Chinese characters, and the aesthetic values associated with them.

### ***Development of Cross - Field Skills***

In addition to stimulating learning motivation and enhancing cultural understanding, practical cultural activities also help to cultivate students' multiple cross - field skills.

In a Chinese cooking workshop, students need to work in teams to prepare dishes. In this process, they learn to assign tasks, communicate effectively to follow the recipe requirements, and solve problems that may arise during cooking, thus exercising their cooperation, leadership, and problem-solving abilities. These skills are of great value in students' future careers and personal lives.

As part of a Taijiquan demonstration activity, students need to concentrate and repeatedly train to imitate precise movements. This helps to improve their concentration, body control ability, and ability to follow precise

instructions. This discipline and focus can be transferred to other areas of life, such as learning or sports activities.

Calligraphy workshops encourage students' creativity while requiring them to maintain accuracy in the writing process. Students can express themselves artistically by writing Chinese characters while following the rules of calligraphy art. They learn to strike a balance between creativity and technical norms, which is of great significance for the development of their artistic skills.

In conclusion, practical cultural activities have a positive and multi-dimensional impact on students. They not only enhance students' motivation and engagement in learning Chinese but also improve their cultural understanding and promote the development of cross-field skills. Therefore, practical cultural activities are key factors in promoting the better integration of Chinese culture teaching into the curriculum of middle schools in Brazzaville and are worthy of further promotion and integration into daily teaching.

## **Integration into the Curriculum**

### ***Problems and Difficulties***

Integrating practical cultural activities into the curriculum of public high schools in Brazzaville faces many challenges. Tight budgets are the primary problem. Educational funds are limited and need to be allocated to multiple areas, resulting in very few resources available for cultural activities related to Chinese culture. For example, to hold a Chinese cooking workshop, not only are specific kitchen utensils, spices, and fresh ingredients required, but also a suitable venue for dish preparation. These are often difficult to meet in public high schools.

Teacher training is also a crucial issue. Most Chinese language teachers have received language-oriented training and have little understanding of various aspects of Chinese culture. This makes it difficult for them to organize and guide cultural activities because they not only need to teach relevant techniques but also explain the underlying cultural concepts, which requires specific training that is often lacking in the local education system.

In addition, there are deficiencies in logistical support. The classrooms in public high schools in Brazzaville are usually designed for traditional courses and are not suitable for hosting activities such as martial arts demonstrations or calligraphy workshops. The lack of computer equipment and stable Internet connection also severely limits the use of audio-visual courses or online resources, making it more difficult to present cultural

elements in an interactive and engaging way to students.

### ***Potential Benefits***

Despite these difficulties, integrating practical cultural activities into the curriculum still has many potential benefits. First, it can significantly stimulate students' motivation to learn Chinese. By participating in Chinese cooking workshops, students can experience Chinese cooking in a practical way, taste the food, and learn relevant Chinese terms, thus developing a more direct and specific interest in the Chinese language and becoming more actively involved in Chinese language courses.

Martial arts demonstrations allow students to experience the fascinating aspects of Chinese culture. They not only learn physical movements but also understand related philosophical concepts such as the balance between Yin and Yang, discipline, and concentration. This prompts them to deepen their understanding of Chinese culture and language to be able to discuss and write about these topics.

Calligraphy competitions encourage students to be creative and master Chinese calligraphy skills. While writing Chinese characters, students can not only express themselves artistically but also learn writing techniques and appreciate the aesthetic value. At the same time, they develop qualities such as accuracy and patience, which are helpful for their progress in other fields of study.

Finally, these practical cultural activities contribute to creating a cultural exchange atmosphere in schools. Students could share their experiences, work together, and discover the differences and similarities between Chinese culture and the culture of Brazzaville, thus enhancing their open-mindedness and tolerance towards different cultures.

### ***Specific Implementation Suggestions***

#### ***Innovative use of Existing Spaces***

Although public high schools in Brazzaville usually do not have dedicated cultural activity rooms, existing spaces can be used innovatively. The large courtyard of the school can be transformed into a venue for Chinese cultural activities. On special Chinese cultural festivals, it can become the activity center for students.

When holding a Chinese cooking workshop, tables can be set up in the courtyard, and portable stoves can be installed to facilitate students to prepare dishes in groups. Teachers can arrange preparatory courses in advance to explain cooking recipes and related terms in Chinese. At the same time,

daily utensils such as plates, spoons, and bowls can be used to show different Chinese kitchen utensils. After students finish making the dishes, they can introduce their prepared dishes in Chinese and share their understanding of Chinese cooking culture.

For martial arts demonstration activities, the open space of the large courtyard provides sufficient room for movement. Teachers can invite local martial arts coaches or students with martial arts knowledge to demonstrate various postures and movement combinations. They can also use wooden boards or improvised sticks to simulate traditional Chinese weapons. Students can try to reproduce the movements while learning the relevant Chinese terms and can write short texts in Chinese to describe their experiences and their understanding of martial arts philosophical concepts.

When holding a calligraphy competition, a writing area can be set up in a corner of the courtyard with protective measures to avoid external interference. Provide students with writing brushes, ink, and calligraphy paper for creation. Teachers can display famous calligraphy works, explain Chinese character writing techniques, and then students' works can be exhibited in an exhibition held in the courtyard. They need to explain the inspiration for their works and what they are trying to represent in Chinese.

### ***Alternative Teaching Resources***

In the absence of new technologies such as audio - visual courses or Internet access, it is crucial to make full use of alternative educational resources. Teachers can create practical handmade textbooks, in which they copy pictures of Chinese dishes, martial arts movements, or Chinese calligraphy characters and attach corresponding Chinese explanations. At the same time, information can be extracted from ancient Chinese - related books in the school or local libraries and adapted for use in teaching courses.

Communication with members of the local Chinese community is also an effective way to obtain resources. Teachers can invite residents of the Chinese community to share their experiences in cooking, martial arts, or calligraphy. The Chinese cultural items, family recipes, or cultural stories they bring can enable students to experience Chinese culture more vividly. In addition, Chinese art works can be copied onto paper or display boards and exhibited in classrooms or the school courtyard. Teachers can use these works to explain Chinese art and culture concepts, as well as relevant professional terms. Then, students can be encouraged to create their own works using the basic materials provided by the school.

### ***Teacher Training***

One significant obstacle lies in the scarcity of competent Chinese teachers. These teachers should possess proficiency in the Chinese language as well as the necessary teaching skills to instruct non-native speakers effectively. Despite the rising demand for Chinese education, there is a notable lack of experienced instructors. Such a shortage of qualified teachers not only impairs the quality of education but also undermines the capacity to fulfill the ever-expanding need for Chinese teaching (郭鹏., 2012)<sup>21</sup> and (Lu, 2019)<sup>22</sup>.

When teaching Chinese as a foreign language, it demands serious and professional teaching skills. Trainers must be proficient in various teaching methods and means so as to effectively confront the challenges that arise during second language acquisition. This entails having a good understanding of the different stages of language development, being familiar with effective teaching strategies, and possessing the ability to adapt teaching in line with individual learning styles (崔希亮, 2018; 李泉, 2009)<sup>23</sup>.

The absence of professional knowledge within this field will have an impact on the effectiveness of language training (*The Acquisition of Chinese as a First and Second Language*, 2020). In the case of most Congolese teachers, since the majority of them haven't received this kind of education, they typically possess few or no relevant skills. As a result, this situation acts as an obstacle to improving the quality of teaching.

To improve teachers' ability to organize and guide cultural activities, practical training is needed. Schools can organize teachers to participate in Chinese cooking workshops organized by Chinese professional chefs or people familiar with local Chinese cooking, allowing teachers to learn basic recipes, cooking techniques, and relevant Chinese terms.

Cooperate with local martial arts masters to hold martial arts training courses. Teachers can learn the basic principles, movements, and teaching methods for students in the courses and deeply understand the cultural and philosophical connotations behind martial arts to better teach students.

Hold calligraphy workshops to help teachers master Chinese calligraphy skills, learn to use writing brushes, practice writing Chinese characters, and appreciate the aesthetic value of calligraphy. Teachers can apply the skills they have learned to teaching and encourage students to create calligraphy

<sup>21</sup> 郭鹏. (2012). 关于海外本土汉语教师培养问题的思考. 国际汉语教育, 24-26.

<sup>22</sup> Lu, Y. , Z. Y. , & L. S. (2019). Mandarin Chinese teachers across borders: challenges and needs for professional development. *International Journal of Chinese Language Education*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> 崔希亮. (2018). 汉语国际教育的若干问题. . 语言教学与研究, 01, 1-7.

works.

### ***Activity Evaluation and Monitoring***

To ensure that practical cultural activities have a real impact on students, it is essential to establish an effective evaluation and monitoring system.

For Chinese cooking workshops, the evaluation content can include students' mastery of Chinese cooking terms, their ability to follow recipes, teamwork, and the quality of the prepared dishes. Students may be required to write a short paragraph in Chinese describing the dishes and their cultural backgrounds, which will also be considered in the evaluation.

In martial arts demonstration activities, the evaluation can cover students' ability to perform actions accurately, their understanding of relevant Chinese terms, and their ability to explain martial arts philosophical concepts verbally or in writing.

For calligraphy competitions, students' works are evaluated based on their mastery of Chinese character writing, artistic creativity, and their ability to explain the inspiration and techniques used in Chinese.

By regularly communicating with students and collecting their feedback on activities, teachers can promptly understand students' learning experiences. At the same time, observing students' enthusiasm for learning Chinese, classroom participation, and changes in their interest in Chinese culture can help continuously optimize teaching activities.

In conclusion, although there are difficulties in integrating practical cultural activities into the curriculum of public high schools in Brazzaville, it is possible to find specific solutions to overcome these obstacles. By innovatively using existing spaces, exploring alternative teaching resources, strengthening teacher training, and establishing a reasonable evaluation and monitoring system, these activities are expected to become key factors in improving the quality of Chinese culture teaching and providing students with a rich and immersive educational experience.

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