The Impact of Cross-cultural Experience on the Academic Leadership from the Individual and Process Perspectives

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The Impact of Cross-cultural Experience on the Academic Leadership

- What and Why International cooperation?
- Research Framework
- Primary Results
- Discussions
Studying Abroad: Huge Change in the Past 35 Years

New China to the End of 1970s
Closed Door

Early 1980s to the End of 1990s
Just Opened Door (CIDA project 1983-2001)

NOW: The Craze Interest of Studying Abroad for Chinese Students

- China has the biggest group of students studying abroad
- Nearly 400,000 students studied abroad in 2012
- The number increases by 20% each year
- The age of student studying abroad decreases dramatically

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The Craze Interest of Oversea Returnees in the Recent China

- The government spends a lot of money attracting overseas students to return.
- Chinese universities take recruiting oversea returnees as one of their primary responsibilities.
- The treatment of oversea returnees is obviously higher than others.
What is the potential value of oversea studies?

- Why do people strive for oversea studies eagerly?
- Why are oversea returnees highly valued?
- Are there clear comparative advantages of scholars who have oversea study experiences?
- What is the potential value of oversea studies in terms of academic development?
- What are the differences of the impact of oversea study in early stage of Opened Door and now?
Gap in Scientific Research

- Lack of **systematic** interpretation of the advantages of oversea returnees from the teaching, research, as well as educational management perspectives.
- Lack of **individual** level interpretation, except the organizational and institutional level investigations.
- Lack of **process** perspective to interpret the dynamics of effects of international cooperative programs.
Theoretical Model

Academic leadership

Time (context)

Oversea experience

Background of participant
Definitions of the Key Variables

- **Academic leadership**
  - Individual level: understanding academic values and having strong sense of direction & capability in teaching and research
  - Group level: the capacity to lead a research team
  - Organizational level: the ability to lead an academic institution

- **Oversea experience**
  - study abroad more than few months or visit several times

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Definitions of the Key Variables (continued)

- **Background of the participant** before going abroad
  - Scholars focusing on teaching and research
  - Scholars with administrative or leadership responsibilities/experiences

- **Time (Context)**
  - Early stage: The country just opened its door (1980s to 1990s)
  - Later stage: Many Chinese scholars have had a good understanding of the world (2000s to now)
Research Framework

Academic leadership

Organizational leadership

Academic group leadership

Leadership in teaching and research

Pure scholars

Scholars with admin Leadership roles

Oversea experience

The early stage (1980s-1990s)

The later stage (2000s-now)

Time

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Take China-Canada CIDA Management Education Project as an Example

- **What** did scholars involved in the CIDA program get and learn when they were studying in Canada?
- **How** did these experiences influence their academic careers when they returned to China?
- **Has** their academic leadership been improved or strengthened by the international exposure in the three levels respectively, especially at the early stage?
Research Method

- **Research design**
  - Inductive, grounded case study

- **Research setting**
  - Xi’an Jiaotong University, CIDA program

- **Sample**
  - One main research object, 9 comparative cases, and more reference cases

- **Data sources**
  - Interviews, observations, and archives
# Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Individual level</th>
<th>Group level</th>
<th>Organizational level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pure scholars</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early stage</td>
<td>Cognitive enlightenment + limited behavioral impact</td>
<td>Cognitive understanding of team work and collaboration</td>
<td>Improved teaching and research standard; discipline construct; human resource development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Later stage</td>
<td>Behavioral learning, rethinking, and practice</td>
<td>Set up small research team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scholars with admin roles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early stage</td>
<td>Cognitive enlightenment + improved leadership capabilities in teaching and research of the organization</td>
<td>Cognitive understanding of team work and collaboration, and set up small research team</td>
<td>Improved understanding of Western academic governance structure and Set up new institutions with unique governance structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Later stage</td>
<td>Behavioral learning, rethinking, and practice</td>
<td>Set up large research team</td>
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The Great Improvement of Cognition

One interviewee said:

What we saw in Canada may **NOT** be the technical knowledge nor the strategic tool which can be applied to practice right now, **BUT** the thing really can change our cognition and enlighten our thinking, this cognition improvement can affect us in daily life **unconsciously**, what we saw and what we touched decided our thinking and notion.

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The Improvement of Cognition

- **Teaching method**
  - Participants learned the *case study method* from the Canadian class

- **The understanding of teaching itself**
  - Focus on the *critical and creative thinking* of students rather than the knowledge
  - Create an *environment* for students’ self-learning

- **Advanced equipment and prefect supporting service**
The Limited Impact on Behaviors

**Application** of the case teaching method

- Many participants applied the method to their class after returning to China
- Require students to be active and self-driven in class learning
- but Chinese students prefer to rely on teachers to grasp ready-made knowledge
- *The limited effect is due to the passive learning attitude of Chinese students*
The Limited Impact on Behaviors (continued)

- The connection of management class with industries

  - Trying to Invite management practitioners to participate in class or course delivering
  - Trying to create more opportunities for students to discuss with management elites face to face
  - But it was difficult for the returned participants because of lack of close relationship between universities and industries in China
The Limited Impact on Behaviors (continued)

- **Research methodology**
  - The empirical research methodology was *adopted* into their research practice.
  - *Dissemination* of the empirical research methodology through books such as “Management research methodology” wrote by Professor Huaizu Li.
  - The *evaluation of research and lack of solid training in research methodology in China that time had passive influence on the adoption of empirical methods*.
Widening Their View on Research & Trying to Develop Research Collaboration

- Opened their eyes on research, especially the new research fields
- Tried to refocus their research field and found potential collaborators
- Some of them participated in research team, or found collaborators to study Chinese phenomenon, especially those with admin roles
- A number long-term collaborative relationship established with Western scholars
Oversea Returnees as Team Leaders

- Many participants of CIDA program became team leaders (see also ROLF’s paper)
- Some participants became leaders of the degree program in their department or institution, especially scholars with admin roles
- Some participants became leaders of national key research labs or research projects, especially scholars with admin roles
The Potential Impact of Academic Leadership at Organizational Level

- The teaching and research standard of the Chinese BS or MS has been improved.
- Some participants with admin roles became leaders at institutional or university levels.
- Several participants are playing key role to set up new universities or institutions which combine best practice of the West & East (for example, Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business by Xiang Bin, Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University by Youmin Xi).

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Process of the Academic Leadership Improvement

1. Understanding

2. Differences & experience

3. Learning

4. Rethinking

5. Reshaping & Practice

Academic Leadership
- Value
- Identity

China

Canada

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At the Early Stage

1. Understanding
2. Differences & experiences
3. Learning
4. Rethinking
5. Reshaping & Practice

China

Academic Leadership
• Value
• identity

Canada

Academic Leadership
• Value
• identity

The huge difference between China and Canada
At the Later Stage

- Understanding
- Differences & Experiences
- Learning
- Rethinking & Practice

Less difference between China and Canada

Academic Leadership
- Value
- Identity

China

Canada

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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Changing trend</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>“what” is new when going abroad to Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>Differences &amp; Experiences</td>
<td>“what” is different in Canadian universities and “why” they had a different system compared to the Chinese ones</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>“how” the Canadian system is run to figure out the key factors of teaching and research in Canadian universities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rethinking</td>
<td>“how” the practice of their own teaching and research can be improved by integrating the best practice of what they learned in Canada</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reshaping &amp; Practice</td>
<td>“how” can the participants teach and conduct researches in a new way after they returned to China</td>
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Discussion 1: The unbalanced influence on cognition and behavior

Cognition

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Behavior

Oversee experience in Canada

Public universities vs. XJTLU
Dynamics of the Cognition-behavior Deviation

- Many participants expressed their *limited capabilities to adopt the best practice* they learned in Canada.
- The *huge difference between Chinese and Canadian contexts* in terms of culture, higher education system, and economic development level was the primary cause.
- The *deviation reduced* along with the narrowing of the gap between Chinese and Canadian contexts.
- *Economic, social & political reformation!*

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Discussion 2: Contextualizing Effects of International Cooperative Programs

- Rethinking the influence of cross-cultural international cooperative programs in the new era.
- Understanding the influence of the international cooperative programs from different levels
- Explore new forms of valuable international cooperative programs

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Valuable Future Cooperation?

- The National Level Cooperative Programs in Management Education
  - 1950s: China-Soviet Union cooperation
  - 1970s: China-America cooperation
  - 1983-2001: China-Canada cooperation
  - 1996-present: China Scholarship Council programs

- Research, cooperative program, college and independent university (XJTLU)

- National P2P dialogue projects
Discussion 3: Improve Academic Leadership through international cooperation

- International cooperation would benefit the development of transcultural leadership
- In the current globalized and connected world, academic leader should be strong in mastering culture difference and nationality diversity, i.e. cross culture leadership.
- So academics need more suitable international cooperation in the new era.
- Right participant endorse the results
Q&A
欢迎评论和提问！
席酉民教授 XJTLU 执行校长 UoL 副校长

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