

Teaching West in the East: An American University in China

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Having closed its door to Western ideas for centuries, China has always presented itself as a puzzle both for academicians and politicians. Westerners, though, have always been attracted by the natural resources and human power that China offers to the capitalistic world. This study explores the entrance of Western ideas in China from an educational perspective. The researcher spent 2005-2006 in China researching a Sino-U.S. Joint venture campus, exploring the academic challenges when teaching Chinese students. While being independent learners, Chinese students maintained their cultural roots and were proud of their long historical and cultural background. Chinese students were receptive and appreciative of American education, and Western capitalistic ideas did not cause any concern among the students.

Being one of the oldest nations in the world, China has never been totally occupied by Western powers (Selmer, 2001). China has succeeded in preserving its traditions, history, and mystery with a strict argument that China has a history, while foreign peoples did not deserve any form of historical treatment (Barrett, 1994). Westerners, though, have always been attracted by the natural resources and human capital that China offers to the capitalistic world.

During one of the earliest Chinese-Western conflicts, the Taiping movement, the Chinese defended themselves against the Western powers by threatening to overthrow the ruling Qing Dynasty and establish a form of primitive Communism (Newsinger, 2001). Through the Boxer movement, they defended themselves from Imperialist ideas through a national liberation movement (Weisberger, 1997). Both Taiping and Boxer movements were anti-foreign in nature (Weisberger, 1997), and there is no actual account of the number of people who died during these movements. Chinese nationalists were promising that “when the foreigners are wiped out, rain will fall” (Preston, 1999, p. 28); Westerners, on the other hand, believed that these movements were simply caused by the famine and harsh rural conditions, and, after the rain, everything would go back to its normal flow (Preston, 1999). It was sometimes Western ignorance and sometimes the Chinese’s overly proud nature that caused conflicts between China and the Western world.

Protecting China from external influence was both the physical and symbolic duty of the Great Wall. However, with globalization, China’s recent “open doors,” and the Information Age, it is becoming more difficult to keep China closed to Western ideas and ideologies. By opening its doors willingly, China is trying to control the expansion of Western ideas. This study explores the entrance of Western ideas in China from an educational perspective. The researcher spent 2005-2006 in China researching a Sino-U.S. Joint venture campus, exploring the challenges of an American education on Chinese soil. The research

question for this study was “What are the academic challenges for a Sino-U.S. joint venture campus in China?”

Chinese Education

In order to understand the significance of the presence of a Western educational institution on Chinese soil, it is imperative that we have an understanding of Chinese education. It is probably not what Confucius, Mencius, or Chairman Mao Zedong would like to hear, but Westerners are here, and they are here to stay.

Education in Early Imperial China

When missionaries were first involved in the dissemination of Christian knowledge and faith in China, they lost no time in establishing schools as an instrument. They founded schools, not strictly for the children of Christians, but as a place where the new converts were educated and preserved from too intimate contact with the unbelieving world. They had no well-established educational policy. The schools opened by the Christian missionaries were, moreover, confined to the children of the humbler classes. The few who acquired a Western education had little prospect of employment in the government. In spite of these and other shortcomings, for some time, the schools of the missionaries were practically the only institutions where some form of modern knowledge was taught; for this reason, they justly claim to have been the first modern educational institutions in China (Pin-Wen, 1915). Purcell (1936), however, claimed that the main objective of these Christian schools was to maintain and strengthen the converts in their faith and to prepare candidates for the priesthood, and there was no attempt made to introduce Western learning to students. He further argued that the missions had great difficulty in getting pupils for their schools and both Catholics and Protestants had to resort to bribery to keep their schools

going, giving their pupils not only free tuition but food, lodging, and clothing as well.

In 1925, the American system, based on principles presented by educationalists such as John Dewey, was formally rejected due to anti-foreign feelings. The Chinese decided that education should be first and foremost nationalistic, and “Chinese learning should be the essence, and Western learning should provide material efficiency” (Purcell, 1936, p. 77). In this case, once again, East and West misunderstood each other. Each looked straight past the other, believing itself to be immeasurably superior and hence seeing no need to take the trouble to understand the other’s perspective (Preston, 1999).

Traditional Chinese Education, Confucian Thought, and Mao Tse-tung

Reagan (2000) claims that it would be impossible to discuss traditional Chinese educational thought without repeated reference to Confucian thought. It was and still is “an integral part of the Chinese mentality” (p. 105). As a belief system, Confucianism has provided the Chinese with great stability and resilience (Redding, 1990).

Confucianism, as Turner and Acker (2002) explain, holds at its center the value for learning and for the ideals of social mobility, which are achieved by intellectual progression and development. Education and intellectual life, therefore, were at the heart of the social and organizational infrastructure of China for many hundreds of years. For many centuries the ethic of Confucius was the moral basis on which both human relationships and the conduct of government rested in China. It was also the source of traditional educational philosophy. Confucianism taught that man was by nature good and could be correctly shaped by education and all men had the capacity to reach moral perfection (Taylor, 1981).

Despite a period of Communist rule since 1949, Confucian ideology is still a strong force in China today. Taking the family as a model for society at large, Confucianism is basically authoritarian, emphasizing hierarchical principles and status differences. It guides the correct and best way of handling interpersonal relationships and is accepted at all levels of society (Bond, 1991), infusing Chinese organizational behavior, resulting in a largely autocratic managerial style.

According to Mao, the educational system was part of the cultural network of a country. In discussing the wider context of cultural work, Mao stated that the new culture created in the Soviet Union should be a model for the Chinese in building Chinese people’s culture. Similarly, ancient Chinese culture should “neither be totally rejected nor blindly copied but should be

accepted discriminatingly so as to help the progress of China’s new culture” (Taylor, 1981, p. 9).

The educational system was to create individuals that were both Communist and knowledgeable. It was the duty of the educational system to instill into the young political awareness through strengthening their ideological and political work. Therefore, both students and intellectuals should study hard. They should study Marxism, current events, and political problems, which would then help them progress both ideologically and politically. As Taylor (1981) describes, “Not to have a correct political viewpoint is like having no soul” (p. 44).

Significance of the Study

The international promotion of political and economic ideologies through educational assistance was most apparent during the Cold War, when the Western and Eastern blocs competed to recruit allies in the developing world. Berman’s (1983) analysis of Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller foundation programming is perhaps the most thorough study of this phenomenon. On the basis of interviews with foundation personnel and archival research, he argues that “these U.S. philanthropic organizations offered training intending to ‘enculturate’ or socialize a generation of African, Asian, and Latin American university graduates toward political and economic perspectives associated with the United States” (p. 14).

Western universities were seen to be successful in providing advanced education, in fostering research and scientific development, and in assisting their societies in the increasingly complex task of development (Altbach, 1991). Universities in both the United States and Germany were active in fostering industrial and agricultural development in the nineteenth century.

This study explored the entrance of a U.S. institution on Chinese soil granting American Bachelor’s and Associate’s degrees to Chinese students without them having to leave China. The focus is on student views on American education and the challenges throughout their education. Conducted at a Sino-U.S. joint venture campus in China, this study is significant in the sense that China has finally accepted their children being taught Western curricula by Western teachers using Western teaching methods. However, the question remains, “What do Chinese students studying at an American university in China think about studying at an American university in China?”

Pseudonyms and Abbreviations Used in this Study

In order to maintain the anonymity of the institutions and the people, real names were not used in

this study. Rather, pseudonyms were used for people, institutions, and places. These pseudonyms are as follows: (a) China American University, campus where this study was conducted; (b) American University, U.S. home campus of China American University; (c) China Investment Company, a Chinese joint venture partner; and (d) Southern Province, where China American University and China Investment Company campus are located. For the space and practical considerations, the following abbreviations are used throughout this study:

CAU:	China American University
AU:	American University
CIC:	China Investment Company
CCP:	Chinese Communist Party
P.R.C.:	People's Republic of China

China American University

China American University (CAU) was first established in 2000 in the Southern Province in the P.R.C. as a Sino-U.S. joint venture campus. When the first partnership with the CAU ended in 2004, new partners (CIC) were found. CAU moved to a new campus with new partners in the beginning of the 2004-2005 academic year. The study focused mainly on the new partnership with CIC.

Two of the main goals of CAU are (a) to create an environment in which the finest aspects of Chinese and United States cultures are respected, and (b) to provide multi-cultural opportunities to enable students to learn about various cultures in the contemporary world. Courses are taught in English by American professors, and an American University's degree is earned.

Students at CAU first complete an intensive English language program. After the completion of this program, they begin their studies in one of two academic areas that lead to American University's Associate's or Bachelor's degree. The only area of study, for the time being, is International Business.

China Investment Company

The China Investment Company (CIC) was established in 1999 in a rural city in a Southern Province of China. There are four higher education institutions that are located on the CIC campus: a vocational school, a technical college, a technology university, and the CAU. There are approximately twenty thousand Chinese students on the CIC campus. CAU is a Sino- U.S. joint venture university, managed by U.S. partners. CIC provides teaching facilities and staff support. Academic issues are handled by the U.S. partners.

Literature Review

It is commonly assumed that some Asian cultures are heavily influenced by Buddhism, which holds that knowledge, truth, and wisdom come to those whose silence allows the spirit to enter (Andersen & Powell, 1991). For instance, harmony or conformity is a key Chinese cultural value that often causes Chinese students to refrain from voicing opposing views in the classroom (Liu, 2001).

The imperial examination system in China, regularized during the Tang dynasty in the seventh century A.D., was a major feature of Chinese culture for centuries (Krebs, 1996). This imperial system led the teaching to be "didactic and text-bound, with very little or no time allowed for discussion" (Maley, 1983, p. 101).

Students are expected to compromise, moderate, and maintain harmonious relationships in which individualism and self-assertion are discouraged: honor the hierarchy first, your vision of the truth second (Bond, 1991). American teaching, on the other hand, encourages individualism, thus giving the students the responsibility to learn and expecting them to be individuals.

In American classrooms, students are expected to participate in class discussions which often form the core of classroom learning. Applicability of an American curriculum and teaching methods in China poses a significant challenge for American professors as well as for Chinese students. Chinese students are complex learners. Their needs and expectations are different than American students and Chinese students in the U.S. Cortazzi and Jin (2001) remark that although "Chinese students constitute a major group of the world's learners, roughly 25 %, as yet there is very little data-based research into their culture of learning" (p. 172). This lack of research makes Chinese learners a mystery.

Ginsberg (1992) adds that in China knowledge is not open to challenge and extension; that is, students arguing with their teachers. The teacher decides which knowledge is to be taught, and the students accept and learn that knowledge.

Even though American education is valued, American ideology is still a mystery for Chinese students and a difficult concept to understand and, most importantly, accept as valid. Gross (1996) reports that a high school political economics text explains the American system as follows:

We can firmly believe that the system of socialism possesses an incomparable superiority over the system of capitalism. The Western world is not a heaven neither is the United States a land of hope

and opportunity. In the final analysis, socialism is a better social system than capitalism, and the socialist new China is the most lovable place to live on the earth. (p. 137)

Another significant academic issue is having American academics on Chinese soil at an American university. Bodycott and Walker (2000) argue that in Confucian societies many local staff are wary of foreigners and are concerned with what they see as an invasion of Western cultural and educational ideologies and values. These foreign academics often face difficulties adjusting to life in their new institutions and countries. Some experience stress related to alienation from families. Some experience the challenges of living in a foreign culture and working in institutions that are very different from what they had previously experienced in their home countries. To be effective, they must learn to cope with such challenges. It is also worth noting that some foreign academics bring with them preconceived beliefs about their role. As Bodycott and Walker (2000) note, "Many see themselves as savior, that is, bringing the best of the West to a developing country" (p. 81).

Cheating and plagiarism is another issue that American professors face in their Chinese classrooms. Sapp (2002) explains, "Chinese students often consider cheating as a skill that everyone should develop just like math and computer skills; this skill is something they feel that they need in order to compete in the real world" (p. 5). When Chinese students plagiarize, they are actually honoring the actual author. For them, mentioning the name of the author or the source can be perceived as dishonoring them. Sapp later concludes that "it is extremely difficult for most of us to take a step back from our values and beliefs about plagiarism and academic dishonesty in order to be more sensitive to broader cultural, social, and political milieu" (p. 9).

Methodology

The research for this study was conducted in the People's Republic of China. CAU was used as the basis for this case, and the researcher lived and worked in China for the duration of the study.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

Patton (1990) claims that qualitative research is the most suitable research method for studies in Third World settings. Years of experience with large scale quantitative surveys and approaches has shown that the data-management problems of implementing large-scale efforts in Third World settings are typically so severe that validity and reliability are in serious doubt.

The data could not be trusted, and it was so expensive to collect such data that little or no time was left to analyze and use the data. Case studies are manageable and are trustworthy when carefully done, whereas large, generalizable samples may prove problematic due to the multitude of technical, logistical, and management issues in Third World settings.

Data Collection

Data were acquired through semi-structured interviews, surveys, and participant observations. The researcher interviewed, surveyed, and observed Chinese students studying at CAU. Participants were present and former students at CAU. Open-ended semi-structured interviews were utilized through which the investigator asked key respondents for the facts of a matter as well as for the respondents' opinions about events (Yin, 1994). Berg (2004) defines semi-structured interviews as "involving the implementation of a number of predetermined questions and special topics" (p. 81). Structured interviews were not used because "as the interview becomes more and more structured, one often runs the risk of asking leading questions" (Shank, 2002, p. 46). Regarding unstructured interviews, Robson (1993) argues that although unstructured interviews are very helpful in discovering new insight, they are difficult to apply when interviewing non-native speakers.

The presence of the researcher as a direct participant on campus was an important part of the research. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) explain that qualitative research "has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument. Researchers enter and spend considerable time in schools, families, neighborhoods, and other locales learning about educational concerns" (p. 27). They further add that qualitative researchers go to the particular setting because "they are concerned with context. They feel that action can be best understood when it is observed in the setting in which it occurs. The setting has to be understood in the context of the history of the institutions of which they are a part." (p. 27).

Participant Responses and Investigator Observations

This field research was conducted during the 2005-2006 academic year at CAU. While collecting data, the investigator had the opportunity to work at CAU as an instructor. The investigator arrived in China in September 2005 and stayed at CAU until June 2006 conducting this research. He spent seven to ten hours, five days a week, interacting with students, staff, faculty, and administrators. His teaching hours were scheduled in the mornings so that he could have time to

observe and take field notes in the afternoons. To maintain accurate notes, the investigator carried a mini tape recorder with him at all times and recorded his observations throughout the academic year.

Interview Responses: Former and Present CAU Students

A total of 15 CAU students were interviewed and surveyed. Specifically, nine CAU graduates were surveyed and six current CAU students were interviewed. Their responses were edited for grammar and anonymity concerns. However, because of the cultural elements that can be found in the responses, editing for grammar was minimal. As long as the meaning was clear, responses were reported as transcribed.

Question 1: How did you find out about the CAU? CAU recruits students mainly through newspaper advertisements. Even though the Chinese partner is responsible for student recruitment, advertising through newspapers is considered to be “an effective way to recruit students” by the U.S. partners.

Six of the students found out about CAU through a friend or relative. Three students found out about CAU through the Internet and five students said that they found out about CAU through newspaper advertisement. One student found out about CAU when he was studying at the Chinese partner university’s high school.

Question 2: Why did you choose to study at CAU? Students at CAU are mainly students who have not been able to pass the National Examination to study at a Chinese public university. Even though CAU is accredited by the Southern Accreditation Association in the U.S. and Southern Bureau of Education in China, the Beijing government still does not recognize CAU; furthermore, CAU graduates are not allowed to work for the government as they have not been able to pass the National Examination in China. The reasons for studying at CAU can be explained in four different categories. First, the Chinese students had no choice/alternative. Second, the Chinese students wanted to study using a “truly American learning style” with a “very good English teaching program.” Third, the Chinese students wanted to get “American diplomas.” Lastly, the Chinese students felt that studying at CAU would help them get an “American visa easily.” One student described his experience at CAU:

I love to experience the life of studying in a foreign country and the foreign cultures. CAU gave me that chance and it cost much less. It

should be the way to go, wasn’t it? Furthermore, CAU was providing lots of chances to study abroad after graduate. That means people would be having nice futures after that.

One student who has left CAU to study at the main campus in America expressed his feelings for CAU:

I love CAU. I have no regrets that I spent three years of studying at CAU. Professors are all very kind and they are conscientious. They not only taught me the knowledge which is in the textbook, but also taught me how to study and how to become a strong person in society. CAU set up my personality, the way I think and how I judge things all around me. Life in CAU was funny, full of challenge and expectancy everyday. However, there are weaknesses I feel that is CAU lacks of a strong organizing and structure. It lacks of pressure and life is too easy there for some people. Those guys [CAU students] are not self-conscious teenagers. Anyway, an easy way to study is a major feature of CAU. I don’t want to see someone is going to abandon it. Otherwise there is no significant difference between CAU and the rest of the universities in China.

Other responses included

- It is not my choose, my father’s choose. My father said if I go to the international school it will better for my future. I don’t want to be a businessman woman.
- I can learn lot of different knowledge and skill in CAU that other Chinese university can not.
- I could live in an English environment but didn’t need to go abroad.
- Wanted to improve my English and learned a professional skill—accounting.
- All the teachers come from the U.S.A. I want to try what life is going on in the American Education.

Question 3: What were some of your expectations before you came? Can you give me specific examples? Most of the responses on their expectations before they came to CAU focused on their wish to improve their English language skills as they “expected that they can learn a native English.” One expectation was that all of the professors would come from “America,” all dormitory rooms would have hot water with “good living,” and “rich and colorful living environment.” They wanted to make

friends “in the innocent campus” and “learning as much as” they could.

Other responses were

- American knowledge, learning English, studied by American teachers and professors, American teaching style.
- I think CAU is a big family, a lot of teachers and students.
- I think CAU is just like an American school...hundred percent American school.

Question 4: Did you find what you were expecting at CAU? Can you give me specific examples? Except the “living environment,” most of the students expressed that they had found what they had expected. They improved their “oral English,” met with “high education” foreign professors, and “made good friends.” They “communicated with English teacher directly and daily, so it gave a very language learning environment.” Three students explained that they had not found half of what they had expected. They had expected “more real business stuff,” and “some teachers seem came to China not for work, just for fun. They do not work hard, then the student not to need work hard.”

Other responses included

- Yes, I did. I learned a lot differ from Chinese university. Like working attitude.
- I find a lot friends. I find nice teachers.

Question 5: What do you think about the cost of studying at CAU? When asked about the cost of studying at CAU, few students said that it was expensive but “it is worthy to take those courses.” Majority of the students accepted the cost as reasonable and “worth because all the teachers are national Americans” but “the book material cost a little high.” One of the students, now studying in Canada, said, “I had thought the cost was reasonable. And after I went to Canada, I even found that the cost was so cheap and unbelievable.” One student responded by saying that “I think the cost is okay for me because many students in CAU could pay more than that tuition to study in such this school.” Two of the students expressed their concern on the quality of the CAU program, but they were not concerned with the tuition cost. One of them explained that he was not as much concerned about the cost of studying at CAU as much as he was concerned about the quality of the program: “The cost is ok. But CAU needs to hire very good professor” and one other student confirmed this concern: “But the precondition is the education level. I mean the passing level should be increased. It is so easy go get this diploma. That makes me suspect the quality of the diploma.”

Other responses follow:

- It is so so, not too expensive but not cheap. Maybe expensive for my parents.
- I think its cheap, very cheap. Is good for students to study.
- I think the study fee of CIW is acceptable for me, but as a Chinese student, the textbook fee is expensive.

Question 6: What do you think about the teaching methods of American professors? Can you give me specific examples? Most of the responses centered on the positive aspects of teaching methods of American professors. Having “less students” in the classroom, teachers “talking to students,” “teachers and students being just like friends,” and “enjoying outdoor activities” were main examples given by the respondents.

Some students said that “the environment is not only in classroom” and “in China, there is no any teaching method to improve the courage and speaking skill like at CAU,” so “students love different methods that they didn’t meet before.”

They enjoyed “the actual example during taking the Business” whereas “Chinese style pays more attention on theories than practice” that it is “the reason I could be a business woman at present.” Humorous attitude of professors “attached all the students focused on that lesson.” Professors “went through details of the textbooks, gave representative examples and used easy ways to explain complex theories” and they [students] “can communicate freely in the class.” Professors told them, “do not give up any hard time, pushed to learn more, and gave confidence” and “most of they really care about the students and we need our professors really use their heart to teach us, they treat us as their children and good friends.”

Some students expressed their dissatisfaction as “the professor who has more real business experience will be better and the teaching should not be only teach the thing in book, but also the real business.” Some said, “Some teacher waste the time to teach nothing to us, I like the teachers who use some substantive examples to let us solve the main problem. Not just know the answer from the book at the same time. I do not like cancel the courses without important reason. We pay for the fee.” One student explained that “all the subjects that I took just had the text books, no other additional books, for instance, study guide, lecture notes, and exercise books.”

One student commented about the differences in cultures as “we are come from two different cultures then you can learn our culture from us and we can [learn] your culture. If everything is very new, it is

exciting.” In terms of the communication problems with the American teachers, he explained that “I think if students ask the questions, teacher don’t want to answer or in the American tradition you shouldn’t ask the question. But we don’t know and we ask. But I think the teacher will not angry because they know we come from Chinese.” “If compared to Chinese teacher, American teacher is more like a teacher, for the Chinese teacher is like your father or mother,” which he explains to “fit the students.” As for American style, it “tells you how to live yourself.” “Language problem is the most important thing,” one student responded, and “the other thing is the study and the teachers’ style need to change. That is the most important thing. Because for the Chinese students, they are young and growing up and but for the American teacher, they teach you how to think yourself. So they need to change a little bit.”

Question 7: Are you working or continuing your study at the moment? If working, where? If studying, where? Six of the former students are currently studying; four of them in Canada, one of them at AU in the U.S., and one of them at a Chinese-Australian joint venture university in China. The rest of the students said that they are working. All but one of them were working in the Southern Province as “office clerks,” “business development officer,” “special projects assistant,” and “translator.” One student is working in a Northern Province of China as a “financial assistant.”

Question 8: Do you think studying at CAU helped/will help you find a better job after graduation? Why? Why not? Most of the answers focused on benefiting from gaining confidence in their English language skills. They explained that they have benefited from CAU in terms of “gaining confidence,” “learning useful knowledge,” “learning a second language,” and “help me open my mind.”

Other responses included

- Yes. I learned things from life more than from books. The teachers not only were teaching you the knowledge from book but also the life. They try to help us and give us confidence. They try to tell us do not easy to give up for your life.
- Yes, because I got my confidence from CAU teachers, and I knew more how the foreigner people thinking than before, so when I work for a foreign company, I knew how to talk with my boss, and I learn when you want to talk to people, you cannot hire yourself, even you make mistake you must need to talk. And I know if I want to get an “A”, I need to learn hard and work hard.
- Wherever I work, the bosses like me. And they know I am hard worker and know what

they want. Even now I left CAU about two years but I still dream the life of there.

- Yes. My present job has high requirement for oral English. My oral English had been improved so much.
- Yes, I think present job is ok. I also think it will have promotion in the future.

Some of the students explained that the CAU diploma did/will not help them to find a better job. Responses indicating this included

- I don't think that is enough.
- I still cannot find a better job, because I didn't learn the professional skill well. If I have a bachelor degree, I think may find a job easier. The education in China is getting higher. The competition outside is furious.
- I don't think so. For me, I learned the ability to study, to communicate with people at CAU. However, my specialty at CAU was not strong. I majored in international business which was not enough specialized, in my opinion. So, it would be very hard to find a job once I graduated from CAU.
- Well, it only depends on how well-known CAU in China nowadays if you want a job in China.
- No, because in China, lots of people. Lots of people look for one job.
- No, because I will not be a businesswoman. Maybe I will open a restaurant sell the health food and also I like the children's school. Three or four years old children.
- I will work with my father after graduation
- Not really. If the diploma of CAU is recognized in China, I probably can easy to find jobs in different companies

One student expressed his concern about the diploma he would be getting from CAU as it is not recognized by the Beijing government and commented, “I plan to go on studying at a Chinese school and get a Chinese diploma which major is relate to international business.”

Analysis of Findings

After interviewing, surveying, and observing students, faculty, administrators, and staff, it became apparent that the educational challenges at CAU were not very different than the challenges of Chinese students on U.S. campuses. The only significant difference between the Chinese students at CAU and Chinese students in the U.S. was the issue that CAU

was not approved by the Beijing government. Even though most of these students have not been to the U.S., the needs and expectations of CAU students were similar to those of the Chinese students in the U.S.

For example, CAU students have expressed their major concern to be the “language problem,” that is their lack of English language skills. Even though CAU has an intensive ESL program with experienced teachers, and, CAU students study English language for nearly one academic year, students at CAU considered their English language skills “inadequate.”

As for the Chinese students in the U.S., during interviews with six East Asian students at a U.S. institution in the U.S., Dillon and Swann (1997) found that one of the major areas of their insecurity was the lack of confidence in their English language skills. Takahashi (1989) reported that contrary to a common American assumption that everybody readily understands English, acquiring foreign language proficiency, especially academic English in adult years, requires relatively long periods of hard studying, strong linguistic ability, and an extensive knowledge of the adopted culture. Tompson and Tompson (1996), as reported in Senyshyn et al. (2001), explained that international students enrolled in business programs also identified the lack of confidence in language skills to be one of the most daunting barriers to a positive adjustment experience. One of the most widely used tools to measure the language proficiency level of the students is the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). However, because of the complexity of the language proficiency, there are a significant number of studies suggesting the lack of relationship between the TOEFL and academic success (Stover, 1982; Özturgut, 2001). CAU also uses TOEFL as a measurement tool for students’ English language skills. After studying English language for almost one academic year, the students then continue with their content classes. However, there is not sufficient English language support after their first year even though they might still be struggling to understand their textbooks and follow the instruction in the classroom.

The research data indicate that challenges faced by CAU students, other than the lack of English language skills, centered around “CAU not being recognized by the Chinese government,” “expensive textbooks,” “teachers not being professional,” and, at times, “not having an idea” of what they [teachers from the U.S.] are teaching. These findings were not expected and there was no indication from the literature review conducted prior to this study. It was only after the interviews with the students that the cost of textbooks and quality of instructors were found to cause significant issues with the students.

In contrast to the literature suggesting Chinese students’ refrain from voicing opposing views in the

classroom (Liu, 2001), or their unwillingness to speak out, to question, or to criticize (Tsui, 1996), the data presently collected does not indicate any such characteristics of Chinese students. Chinese students in this study expressed concern and criticism, to a certain extent, of American teachers. As for American teachers, they have explained that Chinese students were responding to an American education system positively.

One issue expressed by one of the Chinese students was that the Chinese students needed to learn how to study “by themselves” as the American teachers require the students to be self-motivated. American teachers encourage individualism, give the students the responsibility to learn, and expect them to be independent individuals, but Chinese students at CAU struggle to understand the reason behind teachers asking them to be independent individuals, which is contrary to their past cultural experiences. For them, asking them to be individuals is almost like asking them to leave their centuries-long traditions of family and society, which simply does not make sense to them. Bond (1992) confirms that the Chinese students are expected to compromise, moderate, and maintain harmonious relationships in which individualism and self-assertion are discouraged.

Regarding the teachers’ classroom discipline issues, it was mainly due to their inexperience in teaching, as they had minimal, if any, teaching experience prior to coming to China. Even though discipline problems are uncommon in Chinese classrooms where students have been taught never to question their tutors or challenge their judgment (Liu, 2001; Bond, 1992), American teachers had discipline problems due to their lack of experience in academia, as educators. The interview and survey data included responses that the CAU teachers lacked classroom management skills, and they either became “too friendly” with the students or “too distant.”

U.S. teaching style was considered to be an attraction for the students at CAU. CAU students reported that one of the main reasons for them to study at CAU was “American teaching style,” in addition to their main motivation, which is getting an “American diploma.” It was confirmed through this study that American teaching style was greatly enjoyed by Chinese students and its benefits were highly appreciated by the Chinese students and parents. Chinese students found the U.S. teaching style to be effective and “fun” compared to the Chinese style, which is text-bound and didactic.

CAU students’ motivation played a significant part in their academic success. Chang (1999) indicates that there is great pressure to succeed academically for Chinese students which is primarily because parents, uncles, aunts and other members of the extended family

participate in the children's learning. Most of the CAU students explained that studying at CAU was not their option, but they chose to study at CAU upon the "strong recommendation" of their parents and/or relatives. Overall, the educational challenges at CAU were due to CAU's non-accreditation by the Chinese government, faculty members' lack of teaching experience and professionalism, expensive textbooks for students, and cheating and discipline problems for CAU teachers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Chinese students at CAU are not traditional Chinese students, expecting the teacher to have the ultimate power while obeying the authority without questioning. In contrast, they are asking questions and are very much aware of the quality of the instruction and the degree in general. With the Internet and other information sources being readily available to them, they are researching and learning about what they should expect from a U.S. education.

It should be noted that Western teaching methods, though highly enjoyed by Chinese students at CAU, are not always the "best practice in teaching." Wenzhong and Grove (1999) explain:

We know that some Western educators are strongly convinced of the superiority of their methods. Nevertheless, we believe that they will be overstepping their bounds if they are assertive in pressing Western methods on their Chinese counterparts. For thousands of years the Chinese have been successful in learning needed information and skills using traditional pedagogical procedures. It is presumptuous for outsiders to visit and, after a rather brief period of observation, set out to reform those procedures. (p. 163-164)

While being independent learners, Chinese students maintain their cultural roots and are proud of their long historical and cultural background. However, the researcher argues that these qualities do not belong only to Chinese students in China, but to Turkish students in Turkey, German students in Germany, and even American students in the U.S. Chinese students were receptive and appreciative of American education, and Western capitalistic ideas did not cause any concern among the students. Westerners, once limited to Sha Mian Island in Guangzhou, China, now are free to roam around the school campuses in China and, most importantly, they are welcomed by the Chinese.

This study concludes that there are many academic challenges for students, teachers, and administrators. The main academic challenge for students is that the American teachers need to understand the Chinese

learner, and thus, respond to the needs and expectations of these students. The lack of socio-cultural and instructional training for these instructors causes academic weakness for this program and student dissatisfaction. Chinese students do not necessarily follow the traditions of the past, but rather, are very open and question the education and the treatment they are receiving through a Sino-U.S. joint venture university. It should not be assumed that Chinese students will be accepting an average American education, but rather, hiring instructors with interest, enthusiasm, and qualifications to provide a quality learning environment should be the main focus. Chinese students know what they need and are quite aware of the weaknesses of the American education they are receiving through this joint venture. They need more experienced instructors. They need utilization of the technology for their education. They do their homework regarding the education they should be receiving, and such joint ventures should do their homework regarding the expectations of their students.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was conducted as a single case study at a Sino-U.S. joint venture campus in China. Conclusions and recommendations were made in the light of the data collected throughout this study. Conclusions included the lack of academic and socio-cultural training for American teachers and its consequence as student dissatisfaction. It is the investigator's contention that, after spending three years in China, that China is still a mystery and more qualitative research needs to be conducted. This study focused on CAU and utilized the data collected throughout this to come to a conclusion. It is not the researcher's argument that the findings of this study can be generalized. It was not the purpose of this study to generalize the findings to other organizations and countries but to (a) add another perspective to the literature so that future endeavors in similar cases (in fact, not only for educational joint ventures, but for any form of Sino-Western joint venture in China) could be better prepared prior to their entrance into China, and (b) provoke some constructive criticism in how such campuses are operating within China yet maintain their academic integrity.

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