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Political, Economic, Socio-Cultural, and Educational Challenges of Administering a Sino-US Joint Venture Campus in China

Osman Özturgut
Hua Li Vocational and Technical College, China

Abstract

This qualitative study explored the political, economic, socio-cultural, and educational challenges of administering a Sino-U.S. joint-venture campus in the People's Republic of China. China American University (CAU) is an educational joint venture between China Investment Company (CIC) and American University (AU) in the U.S. that resulted in naming CAU a branch campus of AU. Data were acquired through semi-structured interviews, surveys, and participant observations. The researcher interviewed, surveyed and observed U.S. administrators and executives, American teachers, Chinese students, and Chinese staff. This study concluded that there are many challenges of administering such a Sino-U.S. joint venture campus in China. Administering a Sino-U.S. joint venture campus in China requires a broad understanding of the host country and a significant amount of flexibility. More research is needed to understand how American the so-called American education is in China, including what the standards are and who is, as Knight (2004) says, "monitoring" and "assuring the relevance and quality" of such programs (p. 84).

* Osman Özturgut served as a faculty member and administrator at various higher education institutions in Turkey, China, and the USA. He is currently a faculty member at a Sino-U.S. joint venture campus in China. His research interests include comparative and international education, multicultural education, and organizational leadership. Dr. Özturgut is an expert in the area of Sino and U.S. education, program development, and project management.

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Introduction

While the United States continues to host the most foreign students in the world, the annual growth rate of the enrollment of foreign students on American campuses decreased from 6.4 per cent in 2002 to 0.6 per cent in 2003 (Open Doors, 2004). With the recent globalization movement and decline in foreign student enrollment in universities in developed countries like the U.S., universities are looking for ways to bring education to the student rather than waiting for students to come for education. Decline in the foreign student enrollment in the U.S. is mostly because of the recent changes in visa regulations, especially after September 11, 2001 attacks, growing competition from other nations, and rising costs. Therefore, opening a branch campus abroad and bringing education to the student became an alternative for U.S. universities to bringing students to their campuses. Branch campuses in this study is defined as "campuses set up by an institution in another country to provide its educational or training programs to foreign students" (Huang, 2003, p. 214) while granting the same degrees as they would in the foreign university's home campus.

As a source for student potential, The People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) presents an almost limitless opportunity. China is home to 25 per cent of the world's population. This makes it potentially the biggest market for goods and services in the world. It is not surprising, therefore, that following the economic reforms, which started in 1979, China has been seen as a major growth area for those seeking global market opportunities.

Chinese Higher Education and Branch Campuses

The demand for higher education in China has increased dramatically during the last decade. In 1998, universities and colleges admitted about 1.08 million new students; by 2002, this figure rose to about 3.49 million. By 2005, it was estimated that the enrollment rate would exceed 15 percent of the college age cohort (Chen, 2002). With the growing student market in China, many universities in the U.S. and in many other developed countries are exploring opportunities for getting their share of this potential student population.

Through opening branch campuses in China, U.S. universities are not only intending to encourage a global education for their native students, but also are creating considerable revenue by means of high tuition. They are creating a potential market for the U.S. universities, as students graduating from these branch campuses are applying for visas to go to the U.S. for their advanced studies.

However, opening a branch campus and running it has its own unique challenges, especially in China. The challenges of doing business in China are immense, both for indigenous companies and for foreign companies attempting to penetrate these immense potential markets (Newell, 1999). Many hurdles exist as Eckel, Green and Caine (2004) argue in opening a branch campus in cooperation with a Chinese university. Firstly, starting a branch campus requires a significant investment of time and money and

presents challenges in convincing board members, as the return on investment is not certain and may not be immediate (Eckel et al., 2004). The second challenge is recruiting students who might not be attracted by an American brand name university. The third challenge is setting market-appropriate tuition and fees, given the economic hardships in China. The fourth challenge lies in gaining approval from the Chinese Government to offer American degrees. Last but not the least is the challenge of how a branch campus should be run.

There is extensive literature on the operational challenges of 'Sino-Foreign joint ventures' but the research on administering a 'Sino-U.S. educational joint venture' is minimal, if any. Many studies discuss a wide range of issues pertaining to joint ventures but none looks at the education sector in specific terms (Boisot & Child, 1988; Willis, 2000a; Little, 2000; Child, 2000; Hofstede, 1980). However, even such studies have shortcomings and need for extensive research to add knowledge to the current literature is imperative.

This study explores the political, economic, socio-cultural, and educational challenges of administering a Sino-U.S. joint venture campus in the People's Republic of China. The research for this study was conducted at a Sino-U.S. educational joint venture campus in China. China American University (CAU) is an educational joint venture between China Investment Company (CIC) and American University (AU) in the U.S. CAU is a branch campus of AU. Through this campus, Chinese students can receive American education and American Associate's and Bachelors degrees without having to leave China. The only major offered at the time of the study was International Business.

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: 1) China American University, (campus where this study was conducted) 2) American University (U.S. home campus of China American University), 3) China Investment Company (Chinese joint venture partner), and 4) 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

ABM: American Business Man

AUP: President of American University

DAP: Director of Academic Programs

VP: Vice President of American University

CIC: China Investment Company

CCP: Chinese Communist Party

P.R.C.: People's Republic of China

Review of Related Literature

Since the reopening of China for business in 1978, joint ventures have been the most frequent entry mode for small and medium–sized international firms, and various leading multinational companies (Child, 2000). China has embarked on a further major phase of enterprise reform in which the promotion of giant enterprises, new forms of corporate governance, entrepreneurship and internationalization are to be the key elements.

Approximately 16 million of China's 1.3 billion population are enrolled in post-secondary programs (China International Education Association, 2004). China has one of the largest state higher education systems in the world with more than 3,000 universities and colleges—of these, 1,225 are full-time colleges and universities; 686 adult higher education institutions; and 1,202 new private universities and colleges (Min, 2004). Many of these universities and institutes have developed alliances and undertaken a broad range of activities with foreign counterparts. With the literature indicating that the number of educational joint ventures is increasing (Willis, 2000a; Willis, 2000b; Si & Bruton, 1999; Little, 2000; Hofstede, 1980; Knight & de Wit, 1999; Hayhoe, 1989), there are many challenges faced by both the American and the Chinese sides, especially in China.

Challenges of Administering a Sino-U.S. Joint Venture Campus

Xuan and Graf (1996) argue that when investing in China it is important to know about the economic, legal [political], and the socio-cultural environment in the country. In an educational joint venture, educational challenges must be included in any research undertaken to determine the specifics and underlying assumptions of these challenges.

Political Challenges

In Communist countries, the education system has been central to the teachings of Communism. It is understandable that allowing an American educational institution with democratic traditions to operate in China would weaken the communist convictions of the younger generation. Especially, Western management theories are considered as "capitalism being preached in China" (Southworth, 1999, p. 327). Involvement of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in any business including the educational joint ventures does have significant effect on the operation of such businesses.

Tse, Au, and Vertinsky (1996) argue that the choice of levels of government interference may bear greater significance in China than in other market economies because they represent different risks to the investing forms. Generally speaking, the higher the level of government involved, the more secure the ventures. "This is because higher level governments have more authority in approving projects, interpreting government policies, and exercising controls" (p. 144).

Economic Challenges

One economic challenge is the tuition fee that students pay for their education. Xiaoping (2002) reports that "Qinghua University, Beijing University (with the exceptions of a few specializations), People's University, and Beijing Normal university will be charging 4,800 yuan per person annually; Beijing Technology University, Beijing Science and Technology University, Beijing Post and Telecommunications University, Beijing Aeronautics University, and Beijing Chemical Engineering University will be charging around 5,000 yuan for most specializations; and the University of Foreign Economics and Trade will be charging 6,000 yuan" (p. 22).

Another economic challenge is that the U.S. partners face in a Joint Venture is the wages of the teachers and the staff. Holton (1990) found that most American managers of joint ventures in China are especially unhappy with the policy requiring Chinese counterparts of U.S. managers to be paid salaries comparable to the Americans. The Chinese argued that there should be equal pay for equal work.

Socio-cultural Challenges

Chinese culture has a long history, showing great persistence and coherence. The roots are primarily in the religio-philosophical traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism (Shi & Westwood, 2000). Harmony is a core element, central to the main religio-philosophical traditions and critical in orientations to the self, environment and social relationships. "A 'harmony-with' the environment is prescribed rather than the 'mastery-over' prescribed in the western tradition" (p. 191). This entails a non-interventionist, outer-directed and situation-accepting orientation (Leung, 1992) in contrast to a Western problem-solving orientation (Adler, 1991).

In his 2004 article Xiaohua argues that dealing with cultural differences is a major concern to international business scholars and practitioners. Tsang (1999) explains this challenge as: "Managers from industrialized countries are ready to teach native Chinese staff, but seldom do they realize that they can learn something from the locals" (p. 94). Westerners are anxious to "teach the rest of the world" (Xiaohua, 2004, p. 39).

Role of Guanxi

Cultural roots of Guanxi reside in the Confucian legacy. According to Confucianism, an individual is fundamentally a social or relational being. Social order and stability depend on a properly differentiated role relationship between particular

individuals. Confucius defined five cardinal role relations (called wu lun): emperor-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder-younger brothers and friend-friend. Tsui and Farh (2000) explain that the term 'wu lun' in the Confucian ideology is analogous to the contemporary concept of guanxi. Yang (1993) describes 'wu lun' as follows:

> As a highly formalistic cultural system…[requiring] each actor to perform his or her role in such a way that he or she should precisely say what he or she was supposed to say, and not to say what he or she was not supposed to say. In order to be a good role performer, the actor usually had to hide his or her free will…This is why Chinese have been said to be situation-centered or situationally determined. (p. 29-30)

Guanxi refers to a special kind of relationship characterized by implicit rules of obligation and reciprocity (Chen, 1994). Such relationships can grow into complex networks that constitute a "highly differentiated intricate system of overt or covert as well as formal and informal social subsets governed by the unwritten law of reciprocity" (Wilpert & Scharpf, 1990, p. 647). Alston (1989), however, argues that guanxi is a viable mechanism for coping with China's highly personalistic social order.

Guanxi provides the lubricant for the Chinese to get through life. It is a form of social investment. No company in the Chinese business world can succeed unless it benefits from an extensive Guanxi. Although Guanxi brings obligations and costs to its beneficiary, these are mainly social obligations rather than economic ones (Luo, 1995). Chinese nationals tend to rely heavily on personal relationships (Guanxi) in business dealings (Chen, 1994).

Guanxi can also be defined as a special type of relationship which contains "trust, favor, dependence and adaptation, and often leads to insider-based decision making in the business world" (Chan, Cheng, & Szeto, 2002, p. 327). Under conditions of poor legal infrastructures (e.g., and underdeveloped education law system), guanxi might result in unethical business practices rendering privileged treatments to members within the same guanxi network and under-table dealing. "A guanxi network may represent the only efficient means to conduct business in countries where distribution and legal systems are far from fully developed" (Chan et al., 2002, p. 328). This unique Chinese way of resolving business conflicts also reminds foreign enterprises of the importance to cultivate guanxi with Chinese officials to protect their corporate interests in the country. While "Westerners perceive certain business practices (e.g. gift giving) as bribery, their Chinese counterparts may regard them as totally acceptable and necessary for cultivating mutual trust and long-term relationship" (p. 328). Therefore, coping with complexity in China is thus closely tied in with foreign investor policy on local partnerships, that is, forming guanxi.

Osland (1990) also suggests that "Chinese cultural values are largely formed and created from interpersonal relationships and social orientations" (p. 7). To a certain degree, the human relationship network acts as the most important lever or strategy in

operating management and administration in China (Sun, Vandenberghe, & Creemers, 2003).

Warren, Dunfee, and Li (2004) conducted two studies on Guanxi. The first one was on the effects of guanxi on different social groups. Two hundred and three Chinese business people participated in this study. The second study tested, with the participation of hundred and ninety five Chinese business people, whether guanxi was helpful or harmful to social groups. Their findings varied. They suggested that guanxi may result in positive and/or negative outcomes. They utilized five scenarios for this research:

> Scenario 1: Mr. Wang, a manager of a middle-size and state-owned company, relies on his friendship with local government officials to avoid paying fines for violating pollution regulations.
>
> Scenario 2: Mr. Zhang, a sales manager for a machine-tool factory, gives gifts to the procurement department of his large customers.
>
> Scenario 3: Mr. Liu, a manager who is in charge of a procurement department in a large detergent company, agreed to buy a large amount of material from his boss's brother's company.
>
> Scenario 4: Mr. Wu, a general manager of a branch of Bank of China in He Nan Province, only hires his old classmates who attended college with him.
>
> Scenario 5: Mr. Chen, a business manager in a large restaurant in Jinan city, is visited by officials who say Chen violated an unwritten accounting regulation. The officials send Chen to jail for a week. One of Chen's employees, Ms. Wu, is friends with the officials and asks the officials to let Chen pay money to avoid pending time in jail. The officials agree and Chen pays the money.
>
> Scenario 6: Wu Chang, a business manager, develops a loyal, long-lasting relationship with his set of customers. (p. 360)

The researchers found that "All scenarios were considered authentic examples of guanxi."(p. 361).

Face

"Face" is another important consideration for joint ventures in China. Hwang (1987), Alston (1989), Chen (1995) suggest that even though Face might exist in any society, it has special importance in Chinese societies because of its centrality in social life and business transactions. Shi & Westwood (2000) explain that for the Chinese, face concerns one's dignity, respect, status and prestige; thus social and business interactions should occur without anyone losing face. Sun et al. (2003) confirm that face for a Chinese is very important. It is even more important than dignity for a Westerner because dignity is only associated with an individual person but face is associated with the dignity of the individual's family, relatives, and a group of people. When a manager criticizes an

employee, whether in private or in presence of others, s/he causes that employee to lose face. Holton (1990) says that then the manager also looses face because s/he or caused the subordinate to lose face. This means that criticism of performance on the job must be handled in a very delicate way, with criticisms disguised as suggestions for improvement. The foreigner manager who is accustomed to dealing with workers in a straightforward way, open and blunt, must be aware of the Chinese employees' concern for "face" if he is to be effective.

Educational Challenges

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).

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. It is also worth noting that some foreign academics bring with them preconceived beliefs about their role. "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 that "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).

Methodology

The research for this study was conducted in the People's Republic of China. CAU was used as the basis for this case study. The researcher lived and worked in China for the duration of the research. The research question was: "What are the Political, Economic Socio-cultural, and Educational Challenges of Administering a Sino-U.S. Joint Venture Campus in China?"

Data Gathering

Data were acquired through semi-structured interviews, surveys and participant observations. The researcher interviewed, surveyed and observed U.S. administrators and executives, American teachers, Chinese students, and Chinese staff. The presence of the researcher as a direct participant on campus was an important part of the research. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) explain that the 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) and that qualitative research uses the natural setting as the source of data while the researcher attempts to observe, describe and interpret settings as they are, maintaining an "empathic neutrality" (Patton, 1990, p. 55).

Choice of participants

The choice of participants was limited since the investigator could only interview, survey and observe the people involved with CAU. As a relatively new university (started in 2000) and small in size, the number of people involved was limited. However, this was not a significant issue for this study because "there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources" (Patton, 1990, p. 184).

Data Analysis

Interviews were tape recorded, when suitable; surveys were sent out and responses collected, and field notes were taken during observation. Tape-recorded interviews were transcribed and then combined with field notes. Next a content analysis was performed. Raw data were organized, classified and edited into a manageable and accessible package (Patton, 1990). The data were analyzed within the framework of Internationalization concept developed by Knight and de Wit (1999).

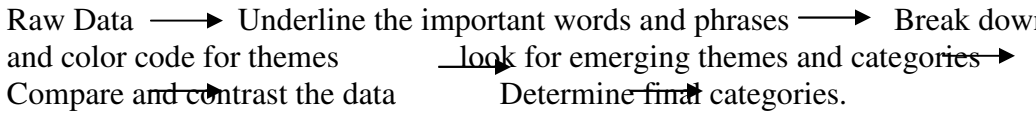
As Patton (1990) explains, the first task in qualitative analysis is description. The descriptive analysis answers basic question. The initial categories for analyzing the data were political, economic, socio-cultural, and academic challenges. These categories were identified through the work of Knight and de Wit (1999). After going through and sorting the data, these were revised to final categories as political, economic, socio-cultural, and educational challenges of administering a Sino-U.S. joint venture campus in China

The data collected were then sorted and a content analysis was performed. Patton (1990) defines content analysis as the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data. Once the raw data were gathered, the researcher underlined the words and the phrases that he thought to be significant. After underlining the words and phrases, the researcher searched for patterns in the data while constantly comparing the data in the surveys. He color coded for emerging themes, breaking down the data into its relevant parts. This is also called "open coding" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Condensing data into "analyzable units by creating categories" helps us in organizing, managing, and retrieving "the most meaningful bits of our data" (Coffey& Atkinson, 1996, p. 26). They further explain:

> The argument here is that coding is much more than simply giving categories to data; it is also about conceptualizing the data, raising questions, providing provisional answers about the relationships among and within the data, and discovering the data. Strauss argues that coding should be used to open up the

> inquiry and move toward interpretation. Coding is thus about breaking the data apart in analytically relevant ways in order to lead toward further questions about the data. (p. 31)

Multi-colored pens were used to assign different colors to words and phrases. As the researcher collected and gathered the specifics, the data suggested more general patterns of order and the constant comparison of the color coded data in the surveys strengthened the researcher's choice of categories. Aronson (1994) explains that the patterns within the codes develop into themes and it organizes the data and tells the story. The researcher was also aware of the fact that a refinement or change of emergent themes was a possibility as he dug further into the data. In sum, the analysis process was as follows:



Limitations of the Research Design

- Data were collected through a relatively small sample of participants.
- Lack of sufficient language skills of the researcher was a limitation. Even though the researcher has lived and worked in China for two years and took formal Chinese language and culture classes, lack of Chinese language skills limited this qualitative research.
- Getting approval from the Chinese participants to conduct interviews was a challenge. Conducting qualitative study in a Communist country slowed down the data collection process.
- Sensitivity of the business environment in China was a major limitation for this research design. Information gathered through this study had to be reviewed by the U.S. partner.

Findings

4 main themes and 7 sub-themes emerged during data generation and analysis. These themes can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 - *Main Themes and Sub-themes*

Main Themes	Sub-themes
The Idea of a U.S. Campus in China	**Preliminary Research*
	**Issues During the Establishment Process*
	**Later Issues*
	**Relationship with the Chinese Partner*
Chinese Staff	**Issues with the Chinese Staff*
Foreign Professors	**Issues with the Foreign Professors*
Chinese Students	**Issues with the Chinese students*

Questions are directed to the participants to find out the political, economic, socio-cultural and educational challenges of administering a Sino-U.S. joint venture campus in China.

The Idea of a U.S. Campus in China

In 1997-1998, the President of AU, "one of the pioneers of expanding overseas," went to China to look for opportunities to set up sister school relationships. With the help of an American friend, who is a businessman and a well-known entrepreneur in China, and his Chinese wife, they met with some executives and started talking about having a branch campus in China. The dialogue with a Chinese university in Southern Province "led to the eventual development of the school." They [administrators at the AU] wanted to introduce something "bigger" and "found the right partners and put it together."

Around the time of their China visit, they felt that "there was definitely a need for it." The amount of emphasis that Chinese government was putting into education in China and "with their future outlook that their education being very poor," that "they thought that this [opening a branch campus] would be a good thing to do." There were some MBA programs at that time, but those MBA programs "required students to take certain courses here but to get a degree they had to go overseas, back to the main campus to pick it up." However, this was a problem because "lot of times, students would not get their visa after completing their coursework here and they would end up with no degree."

Preliminary Research

AUP explained that the preliminary research they did was in 1996 and basically on the whole Asian market. By the time they arrived in China, they had already determined that for the future of the university [AU] they wanted to have a strong presence in Asia. They thought that Asia was very important for the future and commerce in the U.S. and therefore was important for the future of their students on the main campus [AU].

Issues During the Establishment Process

Once they "got the initial project off the ground" and established the branch campus, they were challenged by "just trying to get to understand how things operate in China which is very different than the U.S." and "the whole way of approaching education is very different and trying to get our people here to understand of the Chinese." Using translation to communicate with the Chinese disrupted the communication as "you really are at the mercy of those that are doing the translating." It was "a constantly moving target." Also, as private education was a new thing for the Chinese, "the rules of how things were done was constantly changing and so you would be thinking of doing the right thing and the next thing you find out that you aren't doing the right thing."

ABM explained that the most difficult part was trying to get the curriculum established. It was never done before and they were trying to get the permission to offer a U.S. accredited program which required certain courses that were mandatory for the program to qualify for accreditation in the U.S.

Getting approval from the Chinese government has not been as a big challenge as one might have expected as both interviewees explained. The Chinese wanted to experiment as "Chinese at any level are extremely progressive people." "They change," they add, "When they see something that's needed, they change."

When they started thinking about establishing a branch campus in 1997-1998, none of the "massive changes" of the present time had taken place in China and "thinking was more conservative because they had not seen a lot of this, so, they were not resisting the idea, they were just cautious, to try to understand, to try to get their hands around it, try to feel what is it you are trying to do." The Chinese had some concerns with a private Catholic university coming to China to set up a full program and "they needed to look at it very carefully and they did." ABM further added that it was "with an open mind" and "they [Chinese] never questioned the books. They never said 'you can't teach this,' 'you can't teach that,' and there has been no censorship. There has been no control on any of the programs content, and teaching, so they left school alone to do what it does."

People that they are dealing with in China are mainly educators and they realize that an "American degree is a value." Therefore, they want the degree and they "sometimes understand" that there are strict regulations in the U.S. as they [AU/CAU] are "trying to deliver a high quality degree."

ABM described that they approached the issues they faced during the establishment process by "listening and talking, and explaining. Listening and talking, and explaining." He further added that "if you are coming with an attitude, well, I am going to teach you how to do this right or I'm going to give you better things to do, better way to do things, certainly they are going to resist it more." The solution is to "sit and say, look, let me explain to you why we do it this way and how that benefits our students and how this can benefit your students." He feels that Chinese have been "very open minded."

ABM further explained that the interest of the owner of the CIC is probably not "purely educational" and "the interest is driven primarily by profit." In order to make that profit and attract more students, "he [owner of the CIC] has to do better. He has to give better quality education, better degree, better faculty, better places to live, better, better, and better." He added that "if our philosophy conflicts with the owner's philosophy, with the school's philosophy, with their big plan," as they are building new buildings and expanding continuously and hiring the best faculty, "they don't have time to stop and wait for us." He explained that "We need to understand them a lot more than they need to understand us" because the question really is "how important are we in the whole picture of their plan and how much of their time do they want to devote to this?"

He added that "if you have got hundreds of programs, thousands of faculty, and if you spend one third of your time worrying about this, sometimes it is better to get rid of it, and succeed in another way." When they started the CAU program, they were "the only game in town" but now "there are big universities coming here to set up programs so the field of cooperation is much more competitive than it was the day we started."

He continued to explain that he made mistakes but he has "always listened before I did something, or at least asked advice before I did something." Even though China is a modern place and very open to western ideas, in many ways "it remains a very traditional place." "You cannot take 5000 years of culture out of people" he added. He concluded by saying that "we have to agree a lot more than we disagree and we have to build relationships." "15 years living in China, what I have learned is that I don't know enough about China."

Later Issues

The VP explained that some of the issues she has been faced with since starting the CAU are: "with any kind of partnership is who pays for what. Therefore, they "had to get that spelled out very clearly." "Who pays for what, what happens to the profits, how is that divided" had to be decided beforehand. She further added that "almost anything you do can fall apart in any partnership even if it is just borrowing something from your neighbor, if you don't have the rules straight." Another issue was that they "also had to deal with the curriculum." They had to make sure that the curriculum would be accepted because then, they would not have been able to open the school and be there if their curriculum could not have been honored. They had to make sure that "the things we were doing would not affect our accreditation" as they are "Southern Association accredited." Thus, they needed their Chinese partner to honor that, while they honor their issues with the Ministry of Education.

DAP explained that the first of the political issues was "visa issues", that is, acquiring foreign expert certificates and temporary resident permits for the CAU faculty. "As rules have changed, teachers now must have two years experience prior to getting their work permit approved by the Education Bureau."

The second political issue she pointed out was related to hiring teachers from another Chinese university located on the same campus as CAU. Even though most of the CAU classes are taught by "American" teachers, CAU at times needed Chinese teachers to teach Grammar [ESL], Fine Arts, Physical Education, Biology, Physics, and Chinese Accounting classes.

The third political issue was "establishing partnership." At present, they are in transition from moving between their old partner and new partner. The Chinese government required that they prove that they no longer have ties to their old partner before they can apply for collaboration with their new partner.

The fourth political issue was the credibility of their degree. CAU is an American university that awards American degrees. Students want verification that their American degree is recognized by the Chinese government. As CAU is not officially on Beijing's official list of approved foreign degrees, it makes it difficult to convince students and parents.

Last political issue was, as he puts it, "lost in translation." CAU has its own bilingual staff that works to translate between CAU/AU and CIC. Though staff members try their best to convey messages appropriately and to "properly gauge cultural responses," miscommunications do occur.

Next category of issues was "instructional." AU recruits their "American" instructors on behalf of CAU from the U.S. and these instructors must meet the academic requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in the U.S. They also have to meet Chinese requirements of having at least 2 years teaching experience: "So even if we find a Ph.D. with fifteen years of professional experience, we can not hire her/him because she or he does not meet the definition of a teaching expert."

In the past two years, CAU has had to have some of their core classes taught online, "AU Blackboard". Because their student body has declined due to the inability to recruit and the graduation of multiple students, they taught some of their core classes online. The main reason for those classes being taught online was that it was not "financially viable to bring an instructor to China to teach just one or two courses." These classes also have technical difficulties because of "limited access to the internet, problems with Blackboard password issues, instructors [in the U.S.] having different editions of the textbooks from what we have here."

Another instructional issue was the textbooks. They were at times "unable to get the correct textbooks [same textbooks as used at AU], "not able to get the right number of textbooks on time," "students not wanting to pay for books that have American prices," "students breaking copyright laws by copying the textbook."

DAP further explained that technology and classroom limitations were other issues with which she had to deal. Some examples of these issues included: "not having an up-to-date computer lab," "not having media equipment in each classroom," "not having American style classrooms with moveable desks," "not having a complete English library or access to the same database resources as our American counterparts," and "not having science labs for Biology or Physics like in America."

The next category of the issues was "administrative issues," which included the "communication between CAU and main campus [AU]." Presently, the record keeping systems at AU and CAU are not connected. This has caused some problems with students' files not being complete or having errors. The database that CAU uses was specially created for this campus and "it has limitations."

Student recruitment was an issue that caused significant challenges for both sides. CAU depended on the recruiting of their Chinese partner to increase their student body. Because their new partnership has not been officially accepted by Chinese Education Officials, "our partner has not been able to actively recruit for us, so our numbers have decreased over these past two years. This decrease has led to present students worrying about the health of our school and its future."

Relationship with the Chinese Partner

When asked about their relation with Chinese partner, VP explained that they [CAU/AU] are "extremely lucky." She further added that "this partner is the most straightforward person I have met in a long time." He is "very direct, very honest. He is an academician, a businessman," but "academics really come first" and he is "very ethical."

DAP acts as a liaison between the AU administrators and CIC administrators and tries to meet with her assigned counterparts as needed "to make sure that communication channels remain open and are flowing." CIC administrators have done their best to make CAU feel welcome on campus by including them in meetings, "offer services" to them "as they would to their own departments, and invite the CAU faculty and staff to special events on campus." To help build guanxi, she and other CAU faculty members have made it a point to participate in student and faculty activities such as teaching English at CIC, "singing at campus events," "attending dinners," and "participating in games (tug-of-war)," or "providing campus-wide activities such as English Corner and the Halloween Party" that not only serves CAU students but all students on campus.

Chinese Staff

There are currently two Chinese staff members working at the CAU office as administrative assistants. They are studying "Secretarial English at CIC" and "Financial Management at Beijing University through distance education" as part-time students in addition to their full time jobs as administrative assistants. The two were interviewed at the same time as one administrative secretary had limited English and the other one helped her with translation of certain English words. Also, interview responses were edited for grammar and anonymity concerns. As long as the meaning was clear, the grammar was not edited in order to keep the cultural elements in the responses.

One of the respondents had worked with "Americans" through helping her cousin in his company. Her cousin had an advertisement company and they dealt with "some of the foreign clients." In addition, she worked at the trade fairs, helping foreigners communicate with the Chinese companies. Other administrative assistant did not have any experience working with Americans prior to coming to CAU.

They found Chinese administrators to be more serious and "usually leader is leader and worker is worker" in Chinese organizations compared to the "American" administrators that "seem like a family and like friends, very warm, and active," "When I

need to work, I want to work." Working with American administrators was "very easy, very well."

Language (spoken language) was explained to be the major challenge for both respondents. In regard to cultural differences between the Chinese and Americans, one respondent explained:

> American people is very direct people, 'I like this one,' and 'I don't like this one.' Maybe Chinese people, for example when Mr. X invites us dinner, but you think that the food is not very good. You tell them, "I don't like this one." But Chinese people say, "Oh Thank you Mr. X, I like it very much, very much."

They both expressed their concern for China being a developing country and added that U.S. and China cannot be compared. Most of the Americans affiliated with CAU are "from very good environment" and "sometimes when they meet something bad, they will think Chinese are behind and feel uncomfortable." Even though they are trying to help the Americans at CAU, there would still be complications and it would be hard for the Americans to understand: "If electricity suddenly stops, that is what I cannot help them and they [Americans] will be very uncomfortable. If I am Chinese, I say, oh, that is fine." Respondents explained that "if you want to communicate effectively with the Americans you have to learn the culture first" "You have to know what they want."

Issues with the Chinese Staff

When asked about the issues with the Chinese staff, VP said that they have had difficulties from time to time. She added that "when you have any two cultures, getting together to do something, that has not been done before, you are going to have some problems." She explained that the biggest challenge she had was in "recognizing finally, and it took a long time for me to recognize it, when the Chinese say, "yes," they really mean, maybe, and when they say no, they mean, not right now." She further explained that when they would have a meeting and discuss something, she would "go away with a yes or no" and she would think that "the issue was closed." "Yes, we are going to do X,Y,Z, and I get ready to do that and , no, that wasn't it at all, and if you just say, 'but you just said yes,' it was like, 'well, I meant yes we would continue to think about it.' It was a cross cultural issue where my American thinking caused me to incorrectly interpret what was meant."

Another issue with the Chinese staff is that sometimes DAP is "concerned that the staff does not keep some student issues in confidence." She has had to remind both office assistants to keep files closed and not discuss one student's issues with another.

"Overwork" was another issue concerning the Chinese staff. CAU office assistants' duties also included acting as dormitory monitors, counselor, and faculty resources. Sometimes they returned to the office at night or on weekends to finish tasks that could wait until the next workday. Also, "they are called up by our counterparts to deal with issues that arise late at night in the dormitory."

Five of the eight professors explained that they had little or no contact with Chinese staff and professors. One professor explained that he did not have any problems communicating with the Chinese staff and professors because he does not "communicate with them, except for body language, such as facial expressions, such as smiling and nodding my head indicating my approval and satisfaction with the environment." Also, for some, communicating with the staff was minimal as "sometimes you say something and they interpret it, they think something else." They also expressed their regret that it would have helped if they would have had better Chinese language skills in dealing with the staff.

In terms of communicating with other professors, two professors explained that there should be "more inclusive," and team work should be emphasized as "Team makes everything, you got a good team, you got a good job" and "American teachers need to get to know each other better."

Foreign Professors

Five professors who previously taught at CAU and three professors currently teaching at CAU responded to the questions. The five who previously taught at CAU were surveyed, and three professors who were presently teaching at CAU were interviewed. Responses were edited for privacy concerns as well as for grammar. Present employer names and affiliated school names are removed to maintain the anonymity of the respondents. In addition, order of the responses was given randomly in order to prevent possible identification of the respondents.

CAU recruits professors mainly through AU. There are mainly four ways for recruiting teachers. These are: 1) through newspaper advertisement, 2) through AU's Ph.D. program providing them an International Education internship as part of their degree requirements, 3) through family and friends of AU, and 4) through their employment at AU. Two faculty members found out about CAU through the newspaper, three faculty members through AU's Ph.D. program, one member through his wife's employment at AU, and two members through their employment at AU as faculty members, spending their sabbatical year at CAU.

Seven out of eight professors that were recruited to teach at CAU did not have any teaching experience outside the U.S. Only one professor had teaching experience for extended period of time in two different countries.

Except for one of the professors, the other seven professors received a minimum of two weeks of cultural training before leaving the U.S. to work at CAU. One professor received training individually which included the questions about climate, living standard, and benefits. Other professors explained that the training consisted of "ESL and the TOEFL test procedures, cultural history of China, symposium taught by a native Chinese professor at the AU who had taught in China at the college level," "which specifically addressed the differences of teaching practices and the typical educational process for the Chinese student, Chinese expectations of an American teacher and the

American expectations of the Chinese student and the reality that would be encountered, lesson planning and class preparation and an actual class presentation to members of the faculty, and do's and don'ts on and off Campus."

For three faculty members, the tour at CAU was part of their Ph.D. requirement to have an "international internship." Two of the professors were invited to teach at CAU by the administration of AU where they are tenured professors. One professor explained that she needed the teaching experience to put on her C.V. so she would be competitive when she looked for domestic work. Second, she has "always had an adventurous spirit" and has "an active curiosity about other cultures" and "this gave her the opportunity to explore outside of the U.S." One professor expressed his interest in the challenge and felt he could "contribute a positive influence in the relations between American and Chinese people."

Issues with Foreign Professors

In terms of the issues they have had with foreign professors that they sent to CAU, VP commented:

> It takes a unique person to agree to go to China. We try to screen them out. I often told the story about how the students, how the people come out of the woodwork to apply for the job, but, no matter how much you screen them, you still have people who get there, and really discover that it is not what they expected it to be, and so, they get homesick, or they cannot make the leap from how to teach the American learner to how to teach the Chinese learner.

She further added that some professors "become impatient, or they become frustrated, so, they are not happy any longer." They have had people who got there and decided that "it was one big vacation" but "it is obviously not a vacation." Another challenge was when the person goes to China who "has never set foot in China," and decides after a week that "she or he knows how a school should be run."

Other responses regarding issues with American professors included that some were "not fully prepared for living in a foreign country," health problems," "not having a good work ethic," "not prepared for the limitations of the ESL or Chinese classroom," and not being willing to "serve as extra-curricular advisors and planners, admissions counselors, recruiters, mentors." CAU needs its teachers and staff to "go the extra mile" as they are limited with staff and teachers at the moment.

Most of the student responses centered around 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."

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 that "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."

Chinese staff explained that "Chinese teacher pays more attention to talk by himself or by herself," and "he is the only people in the class." They further added that students listened to the instructors "in most of the cases" and "teacher guided the class." As for American teachers, "the American class may give more chance for the student to learn also give more chance to communicate for both." Also, in Chinese classes "students just listen to the teacher, but American teachers give many chances and ask students speak."

When asked about the strengths and weaknesses of American teachers, one response was that American teachers were not only acting as teachers but, because of their diverse professional backgrounds (i.e. businessman), brought experience to the classroom. As for Chinese teachers, "they are doing teaching for their whole life." "American teachers will bring the student more experience in society but Chinese teacher will bring more students more in the book. Because maybe they do lots of research in the book and as they had already read the book and they don't need anything to teach."

For the weaknesses, one response included that American teachers have different backgrounds. Some of them have no teaching experience and "if you want act as a teacher, teaching experience is very important." They need to learn "how to communicate with the student." Another response to the weaknesses of American teachers was that the American teachers were "friends" with the students and sometimes students would not follow teachers' instructions: "you are the teacher, they are the students."

"Chinese teacher usually pays lots of attention to students' exam papers," explained one respondent. Even though "the knowledge from books can help the Chinese students" to become successful members of the society, "students just memorize the information in the books if they want to get a good mark in the paper." Also, Chinese teachers "will give more space for the students." That is, the students have a lot of free time and not guided by the teachers outside the class, "they don't care the students sleeping too much" and they try "a little to communicate with the students." Another response included that "The students who are taught by the Chinese students are boring. There is no activity."

Chinese Students

A total of fifteen CAU students were interviewed and surveyed. Nine students who graduated from CAU were surveyed and six students presently studying at CAU 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.

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 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.

The reasons for studying at CAU can be explained in four different categories. First, the Chinese students have/had no choice/alternative. Second, the Chinese students want to study using a "truly American learning style" with a "very good English teaching program." Third, the Chinese students want to get "American diplomas." Lastly, the Chinese students felt that studying at CAU would help them get an "American visa easily."

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 have 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."

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 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."

Issues with the Chinese Students

Before she answered the question, VP reminded me that she is answering this question from an administrator's perspective rather than a faculty member's perspective. She explained the biggest issue to be the "language problem." She said that "it wasn't a bad thing, but it was just an awkward thing." If you get past the language, the biggest problem, she explained, "was probably getting accustomed to their relationship to an authority figure."

DAP explained the challenges as "poor attendance/poor academic achievement," "fear that CAU degree is not recognized in China," and "smoking" mostly among boys. For some students especially the younger students, this is their first time away from parents, and they do not come to class. Some find playing computer games more worthwhile than their classes. DAP has called these students into her office but "this would work for a few weeks and then the students would not maintain their tutoring schedule" as assigned by the DAP for breaking the rules on campus.

One professor explained that the Chinese students were not very different from American students as they all have goals, needs, wants, and expectations for their future. There are dedicated students and not so dedicated students.

Other responses included that the Chinese students worked harder and were more committed. They [Chinese students] valued education and the process of education rather than just the degree. They respect the position of teacher and give an honest effort.

American students "are more independent" and "study individually." Chinese students "depend on each other for success" whereas, one respondent added, "we depend on ourselves to succeed in the classroom."

Except for one professor who had no issues while teaching Chinese students, lack of English language skills, attendance, and copying each other on tests were major issues for other CAU professors. One professor explained that language barrier was the "main hindrance to teaching." Although the ESL teachers did the best they could, the time from "going monolingual to bilingual to college appropriate English" was too short. They found it hard to understand their accent at times.

Chinese students at CAU participated in classroom discussions and were prepared when they were given assignments. One teacher responded that the issues he had were "the same issues as any other teacher would have all around the world." These issues were, "not turning in homework," "staying awake during class," "paying attention," and "talking out of turn." However, he emphasized that these issues were not causing any sort of disciplinary action, but were the kind of issues "that could be resolved immediately." Another professor commented that the only challenge she had was "keeping them [Chinese students] quiet during an examination and laughter."

Regarding the benefit of study at CAU, 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." Some of the students explained that the CAU diploma did/will not help them to find a better job. One student even expressed his concern about the diploma he would be getting from CAU as it is not recognized by the Beijing Government and said that "I plan to go on studying at a Chinese school and get a Chinese diploma which major is relate to international business".

Discussions

For the analysis of the findings, "Internationalization" concept of Knight and de Wit (1999) was utilized. The "Internationalization" concept is categorized under four sub-headings. These are: political, economic, socio-cultural and educational.

Internationalization of Higher Education

Knight and de Wit (1999), two well-known scholars in the field of international and comparative higher education, have developed a structure in an attempt to understand and rationalize internationalization of higher education. Knight (1999) defines internationalization of higher education as "one of the ways a country responds to the impact of globalization yet, at the same time respects the individuality of the nation" (p. 14) while globalization is defined as "the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, ideas…across borders" (p. 14).

Political Challenges

The data support the obvious existence of the government influence in the overall approval process of such joint ventures. Chinese laws are changing and conditions of presence of an American university in China are getting harsher, with new visa regulations being an example. However, it is also supported by the data that the Chinese government's interference in the overall operations of such a joint venture is minimal and has only been a challenge to CAU/AU, CIC and the Education Bureau because of the pressure from CAU/AU on "getting things done" and "not understanding" how things work within the overall Chinese system. That is, the political challenge is typically during the approval process of such a joint venture while visa procedures for foreigners have been stricter in the recent years throughout China.

Economic Challenges

In terms of recruiting local staff for CAU, the Chinese staff at CAU was recommended by the CIC administration to work at the CAU office. Eventually, Holton's further argument that the workers in such joint ventures continue to be employees of the Chinese partner and are essentially seconded to the joint venture itself is supported by the interview and observation data.

The Chinese staff are not as willing to cooperate with the U.S. administrators as they are with their actual employer, the Chinese partner. Chinese staff consider the Chinese partners as primary employers and are loyal to them and rather unwilling to take orders from American partners. At times, they think the American partners are insensitive to the Chinese culture and do not know how things are done in China.

In terms of the tuition fees paid by CAU students, students expressed their acceptance of the CAU tuition. However, one issue that emerged during the interviews with the students was that the students were more concerned with the price of textbooks and the quality of education than the actual tuition fee.

Socio-Cultural Challenges

The data collected through this study confirm that social and cultural issues have been significant challenging for both parties of the joint venture as well as the people (students, parents, etc.) affiliated with the venture. This is mainly due to cultural (mis)communication. In the case of CAU, this researcher found this to be the case not only for managers but also for American teachers. It is the (mis)understanding from the American side that the Chinese should listen more to what they have to say rather than listening to what the Chinese have to say.

Guanxi and the concept of Face were also explained to be a significant, if not the ultimate, communication tool for the Chinese and crucial for the continuation of this joint venture. The research data support that the 'guanxi' and 'face' were very well-understood and, in most cases, properly utilized. It was not because they did not know the meaning or the importance of 'guanxi' and 'face' in China, but it was because of poor application within the daily operations of the joint venture.

Educational Challenges

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," and "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 in 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.

Overall, the educational challenges at CAU were due to: CAU's not being approved by the Chinese government (thus not being accredited in China), the faculty members' lack of teaching experience and professionalism, expensive textbooks for students, and cheating and discipline problems for CAU teachers. Even though faculty members had received some form of cultural training in the U.S. before they arrived in China, they have not received any instructional training regarding classroom management and interpersonal communication skills.

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Conclusion and Recommendations

In the case of CAU-CIC joint venture, there are challenges. However, these challenges are not simply because of these two cultures' systems and structures being different, but rather due to lack of interpersonal and cross-cultural communication skills of both sides of the partnership. One of the conclusions of this study is that both sides need to understand each other better for such a joint venture to operate effectively. The question about the CAU-CIC partnership is that how significant this partnership is for both sides. Concerning the U.S. partner, the question is how committed they are in making this partnership work. That is, how are they benefiting from such an endeavor and how far they are willing to go to maintain this partnership? Regarding the Chinese, how significant this relationship with CAU is for them in the bigger picture?

Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher recommends qualitative studies be conducted using single case studies where possible, to give a deeper understanding of partnering with the Chinese educational system. One weakness of this study was that the researcher was not able to involve more Chinese respondents as he had limited Chinese language skills. In addition to the lack of Chinese language skills, even though he had lived and worked in China for three years, he was still an 'outsider,' representing America and working for America in the eyes of the Chinese. It is the researcher's recommendation that future research be conducted, where possible, by two researchers, one of which is a Chinese, and basically an 'insider.' This way, it is possible to get a clearer perspective on what the Chinese are thinking about such joint ventures. It should be noted that China belongs to the Chinese and, as one of the respondents commented, "We need them more than they need us and we need to learn to listen more."

Another research area that is now needed is the quality of such programs in China. The researcher foresees that the number of such programs will increase despite the number of unemployed university graduates from Chinese universities: "The number of graduates seeking employment increased from 1.15 million in 2001 to 2.80 million in 2004" (OECD, 2005, p. 539). Observations and participant responses indicated that the Chinese are tending towards a more quality education rather than accepting any "American education." Therefore, more research is needed to understand how American the so-called American education is in China, including what the standards are and who is, as Knight (2004) says, "monitoring" and "assuring the relevance and quality" of such programs (p. 84).

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