Followers of Confucianism or a new generation? learning culture of mainland Chinese : in pursuit of western-based business education away from mainland China

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Followers of Confucianism or a New Generation? Learning Culture of Mainland Chinese: In Pursuit of Western-Based Business Education Away from Mainland China

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The mainland Chinese learning culture has evolved due to the rapid changes in the economic, political, cultural and demographic demands. The changing characteristics of the Chinese students' learning behavioral styles and preferences, as well as the challenges faced in pursuit of Western-based education, are discussed with suggested recommendations to address these issues. The similarities and differences between Western-based and Chinese education over the decades and at the present are reviewed to enable educators to appreciate a deeper understanding, hence enabling effective facilitation and engagement of students. This enables the usage of a suitable mixture of instructional approaches to facilitate optimal learning process for the students by understanding the learning styles, preferences, and behavioral issues of mainland Chinese students.

Due to rapid increases in the numbers of mainland Chinese students studying in Anglophone countries such as Australia, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, the Chinese learner has become a key recent focus for Western studies in education (Clarke & Gieve, 2006; Coverdale-Jones & Rastall, 2009; Rajaram, 2010; Ryan & Slethaug, 2010; Shi, 2006; Turner, 2006; Watkins & Biggs 2001). Despite rapid internationalization of education and workplaces, the views of Chinese learners remain largely based on stereotypical and outmoded assumptions. Ryan and Slethaug (2010) suggested,

Such narrow thinking and lack of attention to the very real challenges and dilemmas that can confront those working on both sides of these systems of cultural practice can cause misunderstandings and inhibit opportunities for the development of innovative, creative and generative ways of teaching and learning. (p. 37)

Offering quality education for international students entails a good understanding of the cultural aspects and effective methods of knowledge transfer which are integrated with optimal learning processes (Rajaram & Bordia, 2011). The shift of Chinese culture of learning due to the changes in China progressively throughout an elongated history by acclimatizing itself to new and ever changing political, social, and cultural demands are discussed.

Cultural Implications on Learning and the Education System

Scholars have observed that language and communication, learning styles, and previous experiences can all add to the challenges of international students who pursue Western-based education (Baron & Strout-Dapaz, 2001; Rajaram & Bordia, 2011). "The primary difficulty arises from the variance in the second language abilities of students which may immediately place international students at a disadvantage" (Atkins & Ashcroft, 2004, p. 41). Cultural differences can also affect communication. For instance, non-verbal signs can mean different things in different cultures (Ball & Mahony, 1987; Garcha & Russell, 1993; Wayman, 1984) or international students might lack familiarity with native idioms and college slang, which leads to cultural misunderstandings (Lacina, 2002). Cultural differences integrate educational differences; as a result, learning styles across educational systems can vary. In certain countries, students gain knowledge by imitation and observation, unlike in North America (or the UK), where students are expected to develop critical thinking skills and undertake independent research (Garcha & Russell, 1993; Wayman, 1984). Group achievement may be considered far more important than individual accomplishment in some cultures (Garcha & Russell, 1993; Wayman, 1984). De Vita (2002) found that "cultural conditioning is reflected in the learning style preferences of students" (p. 173; i.e., that international students tend to exhibit a wider range of learning styles than local students), which in turn can put them at a disadvantage when exposed to an educational environment biased towards the "home student" (i.e., Singapore, Western-based) learning styles.

In most societies, education systems are political and function as an instrument to facilitate the younger generation's amalgamation into existing social systems (Freire, 1972). China can be clustered in this grouping (Liu, 2006). This is applicable to mainland Chinese students who are coming over to Singapore to pursue their academic studies. The first lesson that many children learn when they start school is conformity. This can be specifically evident in that these students

are taught to observe the proper codes of conduct, including their sitting posture, behavior and responses towards their teacher. The learning strategies emphasized in this restricted system acquiesce with the societal norm, demand obedience and urge students to follow suit. This reflects that individual growth is intertwined with social involvement. Liu (2006) pointed out that the underlying principle of education must be viewed not so much as an encouragement to promote individuality; rather, it is to make individuals apprehend that they are part of a collectivity; thus, they have to conform to the norms and values of the collective. "The teacher-centered education has created a strong dependence on expert knowledge that represses initiative and creativity on the part of learners" (Liu, 2006, p. 9). This educational influence makes an impact on an individual's adult life and shapes the behavior and work values of the individual (Liu, 2001).

Stereotypes of the Chinese Culture of Learning

Yao (2000) reported that Confucianism is "more a tradition generally rooted in Chinese culture and nurtured by Confucius and Confucians" (p. 17). Confucianism has gone through five stages in accordance to Yao's (2000) historical perspectives, which are Confucianism in formation, Confucianism in adaption, Confucianism in transformation, Confucianism in variation, and Confucianism in renovation. Shi (2006) argued that Confucianism "changed throughout a long history by adapting itself to new political and social demands and it is a multi-dimensional concept" (p. 124).

Traditional views of Chinese education suggest that mainland Chinese students place high emphasis on examination results and usually perform well in answering straightforward examination questions that require memorization. This creates pedagogic challenges, especially when mainland Chinese students pursue a Western-based education in Western universities as offered in Singapore institutions. The main influence on Chinese learning essentially comes from Confucius. Conventional educational approaches (e.g., rote learning and the application of examples) have remained largely unaffected because the strength of the philosophy is closely linked to education and learning. The popular view is that the stresses of learning and the need to excel academically leave the mainland Chinese student with little choice but to resort to rote learning of the essentials in order to pass the examination (Yee, 1989). Such learning modes are believed to dominate the classroom behavior of Chinese students in Hong Kong, China, and Southeast Asia. Those students who are better able to repeat the information offered by the teacher are rewarded (Martinsons & Martinsons, 1996). Biggs (1994)

discovered that mainland Chinese students in fact preferred high-level or deep learning strategies over the frequently misperceived rote learning. For many years, this caused the learning styles of mainland Chinese students to be misinterpreted as rote when in fact they were repetitive learning. Unlike rote learning, repetitive learning allowed learners to relate meaning to the information learned. Mainland Chinese students claimed to adopt repetitive learning styles to understand issues taught in order to remember the information better during examinations, thus justifying the exam successes of mainland Chinese students worldwide.

Chinese students are generally quiet in classroom situations. The students are taught not to question their teachers or challenge their judgments. Chan (1999) claimed that all supplementary course materials produced such as lecture handouts and use of textbooks are designed to facilitate the memorization process and lessen the learning burden. As the mainland Chinese students usually prefer not to share their opinions in public (Wen & Clement, 2003), this has typically led Chinese classroom activities to be largely dominated by lectures with limited questioning or discussions. Generally in large classroom settings, mainland Chinese students are unwilling to take part in open discussions and thus do not respond favorably during class discussions (Chan, 1999; Chow, 1995; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Newell, 1999). Chow (1995) emphasized that the mainland Chinese student's self-effacement is infringed when they are required to have an open discussion in front of a large audience. The social norms severely limit the expression of criticism in order to avoid the individual losing face. The situation is further worsened by the creation of an adverse learning environment with their fear of failure and reaction to invalidation and negative feedback. Individual students will speak up in the class only when called on personally by the teacher to do so, while other observers tend to be very quiet and make no comments. The students' fear of losing face and lack of previous work experience make them reluctant to ask questions. Mainland Chinese students tend to emphasize harmony in the learning environment and thus do not want to attack or challenge another group's point of view. Nevertheless, students do speak up in small group discussions: "The use of small-group discussion is more effective in generating discussion, if it is followed by a report of the results gained by each group without mentioning individual contributions" (Chow, 1995, p. 12).

"Problem-solving ability is also largely neglected with student achievement assessed largely through written examinations which are not designed to test ability to work with others and solve practical problems" (Chan, 1999, p. 301). Moreover, mainland Chinese students are generally more pragmatic and

concrete in evaluating ideas. Not only that, but they are less likely to explore unfamiliar new directions largely due to their lack of creativity. As the Chinese mainland students prefer and expect close supervision, group-oriented settings will be more suitable (Atkinson, 1997; Carson, 1992; Chan, 1999; Chow, 1995; Fox, 1994; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Nelson, 1995; Newell, 1999; Oxford, 1995). Teachers are to decide which knowledge is to be taught, and they are seen as the sources of authority and power. Students, on the other hand, are to accept information willingly, and only rarely to question or challenge teachers in the classroom.

Biggs (1994) discovered typical Chinese classrooms to be very dissimilar to the universally recognized format where they are characterized by: (a) higher emphasis on group-related activities as they are student-centered, (b) learning relies greatly on interpersonal motivation between students, (c) the lecturer is the mentor and the student is the mentored, (d) much deeper analytical thinking with higher cognitive outcomes.

Changes and Shift of the Chinese Culture of Learning

Although these notions of Chinese learners are still pervasive in literature, the rapid changes in China over the last decade have influenced and shifted the traditional cultural norms and values which affect the learning behavior of Chinese learners. Shi (2006) argued that the definition of "Chinese students" needs to be clear and explicit, as one has to be mindful of the differences on "their national, regional, economic, class, and cultural backgrounds, as well as age, religion, and gender" (p. 139). Louie (2005) pointed out that the students have different "cultural baggage," for example, "the learning behavior and attitude of students whose parents are professors from Shanghai and another who are peasants from a village from Hunan" (p. 23). Ryan and Louie (2007) questioned the ways both Western and Asian values are repeatedly described as discrete, homogeneous and unchanging.

The broader such cultural and demographic boundaries extend, the less useful and more stereotyping the understanding will be shaped. Recent studies by scholars have reported that Chinese learners prefer student-centered to teacher-centered approaches, where less supervision is required from the tutors, and they choose to participate in interactive and cooperative learning activities (although many studies are on the language skills courses rather than business related courses), where they are more willing to be on their own and not so dependent (Chan & Rao, 2009; Clarke & Gieve, 2006; Rajaram & Bordia, 2011; Rajaram, 2010; Ryan & Slethaug, 2010; Shi, 2006; Yang, 2009).

Chan and Rao (2009) argued against the stereotyped cultural impact on learning whereas social learning was emphasized: "It is the aspects of the social context, rather than cultural heritage per se that affects student learning . . . we need to consider teaching and learning, not just the chineseness of students or teachers" (p. 17-18). Clarke and Gieve (2006) emphasized that "this entails a sense of cultural fixity and a notion of historicisation only in the sense that cultures are determined by a historical heritage rather than emerging through history and thus dynamically evolving" (p. 55). The same point is further emphasized by Gu (2001), who argued that culture can be transformed only after a prolonged phase of confrontation, clashes and conflict between cultural traditions and modernization as cultural traditions are dynamic and ever developing. A recent study by Rajaram and Bordia (2011) showed that active instructional techniques (e.g., case study, individual research project, group project, and classroom discussion) are perceived to be "excellent avenues for quality learning in terms of knowledge and information acquisition" (p. 77). Further, these scholars discovered that "comfort dislocation has no or minimal effect on perceived learning effectiveness" (Rajaram & Bordia, 2011, p. 79). This re-iterates the importance for educators to be creative, flexible, and knowledgeable in their adoption of suitable and effective teaching/learning approaches with greater autonomy and opportunities to penetrate through the barrier of cultural diversity (Rajaram & Bordia, 2011).

Practical Implications on Challenges Faced: Western-Based Educational Curriculum vs. Chinese Learning Culture

A prominent characteristic of conventional Chinese teaching/learning approaches is the importance placed on repetitive learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Liu, 2006; Ryan & Louie, 2005). "Chinese students still learn by repetitive memorization throughout primary and secondary education, despite arguments against this 'force-fed' teaching method" (Liu, 2006, p. 7). This learning style extends its influence right up to university education, where underprepared graduates struggle to deal with unexpected challenges.

Western teachers facilitating management education or training in China time and again come across students who are keen to accurately replicate the course materials in examinations and other forms of assessment. These students are often observed to be quiet listeners in class (Chan, 1999; Martinsons & Martinsons, 1996). This behavior is mainly attributed to the influence of Confucian philosophy on education and learning, as Confucianism places high emphasis on community affiliations within a structurally oriented society. Although scholars have argued that the rapid

changes in China over the past decade have influenced the values of Confucianism (Chan & Rao, 2009; Hu, 2003; Ryan & Slethaug, 2010; Shi, 2006; Yang, 2009), some of the key aspects that describe the manner in which social relationships are maintained in Chinese societies are: face, collectivism, harmony, conformity and power distance (McNaught, 2012; Liu, 2006). These values are manifested in the learning environments in the following ways:

- "Respect for wisdom and knowledge. The authority of teachers who are purveyors of knowledge should not be challenged;
- Preservation of harmony. Individuals should conform to collective rather than developing distinctive values and beliefs; and,
- Concern for face requires an individual to behave properly so that they will not bring shame to themselves and people to whom they are related." (Liu, 2006, p. 8)

Some studies have suggested that Western approaches to management education will not be effectively applied in China unless these cultural values are given due consideration (Biggs & Watkins, 2001a, 2001b; Warner, 1991). Nonetheless, this can be claimed only as a partial truth. Liu (2006) highlighted that a better understanding of Chinese cultural values may encourage some local educators in Singapore teaching the Western-based curriculum to adjust their teaching styles and enhance the knowledge transfer process. However, such knowledge provided by ad hoc, apparently suitable teaching methods does not spontaneously translate into necessary skills and competence for learners to confront the ever-changing environment. This can only be achieved by adopting a concrete framework of effective teaching techniques explicitly applied to address how knowledge can best be ingrained in the minds of Chinese students.

Bu and Mitchell (1992) pointed out the major challenges faced by Western educators in developing management programs geared towards Chinese managers. This can also be seen to be very pertinent in terms of the challenges faced in the use of the Western-based curriculum for mainland Chinese students who pursue it in private international schools. These institutes offer programs with various Western universities to Chinese students. They can be addressed knowing what specific teaching/learning techniques can be used to identify students' optimal learning mode under the three broad categories of understanding, skills and processes, respectively. Many scholars over the last decade have identified the following key challenges (e.g., Bu & Mitchell, 1992; Chan, 1991; Chow, 1995; McNaught, 2012; Rajaram, 2010; Ryan & Slethaug, 2010; Shi, 2006; Yang, 2009).

The Applicability of Western Concepts to China

In general, management theories from the West originate from American research using examples from companies operating in very diverse economic, political and social environments. In order to address such problems, the following strategies are recommended: (a) courses must not merely be pre-packaged portfolios of Western management courses, but must take into consideration the varying operating situations of businesses; (b) much care and effort must be taken in designing and producing supporting materials for teaching, as the mere translation from English to Chinese is certainly not sufficient; and (c) aside from selecting the most appropriate words for English terms, high emphasis and due consideration is given to ensuring that these words have the same meaning in a Chinese situation.

Students' Participation in Classroom Activities

There are mixed views on the students' involvement in classroom activities, for example, scholars have reported that the sharing of opinions, contributing to discussions and challenging norms are limited (e.g., Chan, 1999; Chow, 1995; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Ninnes, Aitchison, & Kalos, 1999; Ryan & Louie, 2005). For the mainland Chinese students, the two-way communication which is normally encouraged in management education, in many cases, would be restricted. Although their receptiveness to learning is encouraging, their compliant and passive classroom behavior may pose challenges for those used to more participative styles of teaching (Biggs, 1994; Ryan & Louie, 2005). From a contrary stance, Shi (2006) reported that the study in Shanghai showed that students "show little difference from their Western counterparts by being active learners and preferring a more interactive relationship with their teachers" (p. 122); however, this cannot be generalized as well as the study is conducted in China, hence the dislocation issues vary in comparison to students pursuing a foreign-based program in another country.

However, other scholars have reported that there is a shift generally in Chinese students' learning behavior in terms of being more acclimatized to participative learning approaches and prefer a two-way communication style of instructional techniques (e.g., Hu, 2003; Ryan & Slethaug, 2010; Shi, 2006; Yang, 2009). However, these reports seems to be from varying samples from specific more advanced provinces in China or Chinese students who may come from a higher social status and whose exposure may be different. The challenge is to question whether Chinese learners' behaviors can be generalized due to the varying progressive social, political and cultural

exposure across the many provinces in China. However, comprehending the rooted cultural values, beliefs and norms of the country in general, but understanding the rapid changing influences to it may certainly assist to calibrate and accustom the learning approaches to transfer knowledge effectively.

Hence, the following strategies are recommended to facilitate participation among Chinese students, especially those pursuing a Western-based education in a foreign country with complex cultural dislocation issues deep-rooted: (a) allow them the opportunity to define their roles at the outset, thus providing them unambiguous instructions; (b) this can be further enhanced by allowing the students to have more time to think about the topics under discussion (e.g., long silences in the classroom may not simply be indications that students are refusing to participate, but that they may be thinking about the answers and require more probing and encouragement from tutors); (c) encourage by giving generous praises and having open acknowledgement to students who attempt to share their opinions/thoughts; and (d) incorporate participation as part of the assessment criteria and requirement which will automatically encourage as well as put pressure to open up and get accustomed to the participative learning culture.

Use of Typical Management Training Techniques

Active learning approaches—such as case studies, class discussions, group and individual projects, role-play and business games—could pose hazards for students not used to open discussions and expression of opinions, as these is heavily reliant on abstract thinking (Chan, 1999; Chow, 1995; Fox, 1994; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Nelson, 1995). On a contrary note, scholars have reported the Chinese learners are highly active and willing to participate in interactive and cooperative learning activities (Clarke & Gieve, 2006; Slethaug, 2010, Yang, 2009). In a study by Rajaram and Bordia (2013), they reported that mainland Chinese students learned more effectively by active instructional techniques, particularly by case studies and group projects. Rising trend and exposure to Western values and lifestyles of students are cited as influencing factors. This is an intensive study as the sample comprises a good mixture and large size of mainland Chinese students from thirty provinces in China. However, the inconsistencies in students' responses by various scholars can be linked to the student pool used where these respondents may have had differing experiences with these instructional techniques. This is clearly reported:

Some students may have experienced the case study technique in the passive style (predominantly lectures), while others experienced it in the active style (relatively autonomous or alone). In relation to the group projects, some students may have experienced high levels of guidance and direction, while others experienced assignments with low guidance and direction. This is especially so for group projects, as the amount of supervision, assistance and guidance provided varies largely depending on the instructors' style of managing them. If the students were subjected to closer supervision, obviously, there was a much higher possibility of expecting a different outcome compared to those given much less supervision. (Rajaram & Bordia, 2013, p. 14)

Nonetheless, there is a certain scope and style of active and participative learning in every typical management training technique to be adopted which becomes a crucial aspect in engaging and transferring knowledge effectively to these mainland Chinese students pursuing their studies outside China. Hence, it is crucial to understand how to incorporate the balance in adopting these management training techniques to teach them and expect optimal learning outcomes.

Rajaram (2010) reported that although Chinese students may not be comfortable in class discussions during the initial stage largely due to their lack of exposure and language proficiency, their comfort level has improved after prolonged exposure with more active participation. However, there were mixed responses in terms of subject of knowledge transfer for class discussions where "it increases students' awareness of subject matter by relating to their past experiences" (Rajaram & Bordia, 2011, p. 75); however, others highlighted "the amount of knowledge transfer was limited" (p. 75). Rajaram and Bordia (2011) reported that students were somewhat comfortable with the case study technique, but "they were not yet very confident or secure with this instructional approach" (p. 76). However, "case study approaches facilitate mainland Chinese students to acquire information with greater ease by enabling them to refresh their acquired knowledge" (Rajaram & Bordia, 2011, p. 75). As for the individual project technique, Rajaram and Bordia (2011) highlighted that "it allows students to present their ideas to a certain extent, in writing the report, thus allowing them to think independently" (p. 76). But three negative issues emerged, namely "their discomfort and insecure feeling, lack of confidence to deal with the project assignment on their own and having a less guided learning environment" (Rajaram & Bordia, 2011, p. 76). This is supported by scholars who have reported that Chinese learners prefer to be guided and directed (Chan, 1999; Chow, 1995). There is no evidence to report on the receptivity on specific techniques like

role-plays and business games on these students, however, we can say that there is a positive indication from scholars that these students prefer a student-centered approach to a teacher-centered approach (Ryan & Slethaug, 2010; Yang, 2009). Shi (2006) classified mainland Chinese students as active learners who prefer a more interactive relationship with their teachers; however, the findings cannot be generalized as the study was conducted in China with only a certain cluster type of students.

These active learning approaches have to be introduced slowly, with clear instructions and guidelines and adequate preparation time, to be effective. In order to help in the group work, it is essential to comprehend the psychology of the group. Issues such as status, "face" and shame may limit the openness of discussions, thus tutors need to be aware of the hidden messages behind what is disclosed by students and be sensitive to such "constraints" on Chinese behavior.

Teacher-Student Relationship and Active Versus Passive Teaching Approaches

Although scholars have argued that there is a shift in mainland Chinese students learning culture (Coverdale-Jones & Rastall, 2009; Rajaram & Bordia, 2011; Ryan & Slethaug, 2010; Shi, 2006), some fundamental learning behavioral aspects still remain, at least until they are subjected to the prolonged exposure. "Chinese students did not think that having their own opinions was important for a good learner" (Shi, 2006, p. 138). Mainland Chinese students' unwillingness to participate in class can be related to their willingness to submit to authority (Wen & Clement, 2003). These are social-cultural values and norms, which are embedded in individuals and influence their learning attitudes and behaviors. However, even though it is unusual for the students to put across their disagreements openly to their professors, they do not acknowledge the information provided blindly (Shi, 2006). From Shi (2006)'s study, it was reported that mainland Chinese students "wanted their teachers to be light-hearted and use various teaching activities. On the other hand, students also expected teachers to help them pass tests and provide them with detailed and clear notes" (Shi, 2006, p. 138). The status of the tutor is particularly important. Before the students are treated according to protocol, they need to be informed about the background and expertise of foreign experts. Teachers must assist students to be instrumental in shaping their own learning.

The close association between behavior and belief is evident with the following pressures: (a) to conform, (b) to preserve harmony, and (c) to avoid loss of face and shame, which implies that the Chinese have preferences for certain styles of teaching and learning. The more participative approaches, which are more usually used in Western teaching, may therefore pose a challenge for Chinese learners (Chan, 1999; Chow, 1995). However, Leung, Ginns, and Kember (2008) presented a contrary view:

When mainland Chinese students had been observed attempting to memorize material, they were not necessarily using a surface approach as characterized in the original Western studies. The memorization was not necessarily rote learning but could be combined in various ways with attempts to reach understanding. This then could explain the evidence of good performance of Chinese students. They were attempting to reach understanding, which is consistent with successful learning outcomes. At the same time, though, they were memorizing key material. This could often be of benefit for assessment, as examinations and tests often reward those who have memorized material. (p. 253-254)

Sustainable evidence of the intention to both comprehend and memorize has also been found in mainland China (Marton, Dall, Alba, & Tse, 1996) and Japan (Hess & Azuma, 1991), so it may be quite prevalent among Asian students (Leung et al., 2008). There is a high possibility that the approaches combining understanding and memorization (Kember & Gow, 1990; Marton et al., 1996) may be more familiar in Asia, as Kember (1996) has speculated that influences on their adoption may emerge from learning a character-based language, learning in a second language, or being brought up in a society that conventionally has shown high levels of filial piety (Ho, 1986). Asian students tend not to express their feelings openly, mainly due to their culture and training. However, with the evolving changes in students' exposure, the younger generation of Asian students is more outspoken as the inhibition in their expression of feelings is somewhat fading. Recent studies have argued that these perceptions have often been based on partial knowledge or misunderstandings of Chinese students but have given rise to negative stereotypes (e.g., Littlewood, 2009; Ninnes, Aitchison, & Kalso, 1999). As Rajaram (2010) wrote:

The mainland Chinese students generally reported that they learned more effectively active instructional techniques, with the exception of lectures as the passive instructional technique. This may be due to the increasing trend and exposure to Western values and lifestyles in the learning and teaching actions of courses back in China. As China progresses to become internationally

recognized by opening its doors to other countries, there is bound to be an increase of Western exposure influencing the country's educational approach and, importantly, influencing how mainland Chinese students are being taught and their learning styles, as well. (p. 298)

These discussions reveal that concurrence with the cultural background, values, learning patterns, and styles are important challenges for mainland Chinese students pursuing Western-based education.

Implications and Recommendations

Rajaram and Bordia (2011) reported that tutors should adopt varying instructional techniques to optimize students' learning even if these are not preferred and learners are not comfortable with them. "Chinese students may prefer passive instructional techniques but not necessarily learn effectively with optimal knowledge acquisition" (Rajaram & Bordia, 2011, p. 80). Instructional methodologies should be appropriately employed consistent with the diverse cultural influences of these foreign students (in this case, mainland Chinese students) since they are required to be adaptable to Western-based educational approaches to assist them to work effectively in Western countries as future managers and in global multinational corporations. Thus, it is essential to facilitate a versatile learning atmosphere (both Eastern and Western) for students to develop themselves to be effective, comfortable and familiar with the knowledge transfer in their future workplaces. Organizational performance is intertwined with students' learning effectiveness, so it is imperative that they acquire knowledge in the most effective manner. Having quality education targeted at diverse students from different foreign countries requires a good understanding of both cultural aspects and knowledge delivery. Central issues are: (a) understanding the various teaching/learning techniques and (b) identifying the correct mix of instructional techniques best suited to foreign students who represent different types of learners and varying learning styles.

No single category of either "active" or "passive" instructional techniques led to more effective learning among Chinese students, rather understanding the varying learners' characteristics should apply differentially to situations based on learners' prior knowledge, practical experiences, maturity level and cultural values/beliefs. (Rajaram & Bordia, 2011, p. 81)

Students' ability to perform and deliver tangible results in organizations fundamentally depends on how well the knowledge has been acquired, transferred and habituated by students from their learning processes and outcomes.

Conclusion

The wide scope discussion contributes towards the optimization of the use of appropriate teaching/learning approaches by mainland Chinese students in order to enhance their academic performance and learning effectiveness. This is well-evidenced by Rajaram (2010), who suggested that further understanding is needed in order to unravel the unknown aspects of the mainland Chinese learner before Western educators or local educators teaching Western-style education can fully appreciate the different approaches to learning, thus enabling them to design better, tailor-made educational programs for mainland Chinese students. "To optimize students' learning, essential characteristics like exposure, the right combinations of techniques, addressing comfort and familiarity aspects should converge to maximize module appeal and effectiveness" (Rajaram & Collins, 2013, p. 195). The analysis review in this paper also helps in providing some insights in terms of offering both theoretical academic contribution and practical solutions for the quickly progressing public and private education sector targeting international students, especially a large majority of mainland Chinese students.

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