

Chapter 14

Understanding Chinese Learners in Transnational Higher Education in China

Yi-Mei Chen

Jiaying University, China

Yan Wei

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7187-9433>

Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China

ABSTRACT

Chinese students have become the largest share of international students in many countries. Meanwhile, the number of transnational higher education (TNHE) programmes has reached a new high in China. This makes it exceptionally important for teachers whose own cultural and educational background are very different from Chinese to understand their learners. The study set out to better understand Chinese students in TNHE by studying a case of a Sino-Anglo cooperation university in China. The foreign teachers' and foreign students' views on Chinese students were collected and juxtaposed with Chinese students' own accounts. The qualitative study finds many commonly cited features of East Asian students evident in this research context. However, this study gains insights of these phenomena and strategies from the very experienced expatriate teachers, who demonstrated a good understanding of their Chinese students. The authors propose a new approach to teach Chinese students. This study is believed to be of reference to teaching in TNHE in vast contexts with students from Confucian heritage cultures (CHC).

INTRODUCTION

Transnational education (TNE) “refers to study programs or educational services in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based” (UNESCO/Council of Europe, 2001). Universities have been actively seeking opportunities to expand their educational mobility globally to other countries through international cooperation, whether this is out of commercial interests

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-5226-4.ch014

or for internationalization (Hou, Montgomery, & McDowell, 2014). This international cooperation type of Transnational Higher Education (TNHE) can take the form of branch campuses, franchised degree programs, or partnerships with local universities. Especially with the aid of online learning, TNHE has become a huge global business (Hou et al., 2014).

Chinese students have accounted for a vast proportion in both international cooperation of TNHE and overseas studies. In 1978, there were just a few international exchange activities among universities in China. After the accession of the WTO in 2001, when China officially opened the TNHE market to foreign education partners, consequently, TNHE programmes had increased to 712 by the following year (Mok & Marginson, 2021). Further, TNHE in China has been greatly enhanced after the announcement of the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools in 2003, and the issuing of Measures for the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools in 2004 (Li, 2018). According to the Ministry of Education (MOE) (2022a), the number of TNHE programmes has reached more than 1230. The reasons for China to embrace "Chinese foreign cooperation in running schools" (in Chinese: Zhong Wai He Zuo Ban Xue) include learning advanced scholarships in developed countries, pushing internationalisation in China, as well as saving students' expenditure of studying abroad (Hou, et al., 2014). The UK is the largest TNHE provider, followed by the USA and Australia (Hou et al., 2014).

On the other hand, following the year after China's accession to the WTO, more than 100,000 students enrolled in universities overseas (Mok & Marginson, 2021). According to the MOE (2022b), between 2016 and 2019, over 2,510,000 Chinese involved in overseas studies. In the UK, Chinese students have formed the majority of international students, their population having increased by 50% over the five-year period 2016/17 to 2020/21 (HESA, 2022). In 2020/21, 360,000 Chinese account for one third of international students in the U.S., as the largest export country, while the UK stands second with 240,000 Chinese students (Tencent, 2022).

National, historical, socio-cultural and educational perspectives contribute to shaping learners' attributes and attitudes. Given China's unique historical and cultural background, Chinese learners' general characteristics are perceivably very different from those of their Western counterparts (Dai & Garcia, 2019). TNHE teachers must take their attributes into consideration. Only when teachers fully understand their students can they provide students with the most suitable education. However, this is particularly challenging to TNHE teachers who come from very different educational backgrounds from those of Chinese students (Wang, 2011; Zhou & Wei, 2021). With such a great deal of Chinese learners in TNHE, either in their home country or abroad, it is an important issue worthy of attention. However, very few studies have been focusing on this.

The current study set out to better understand Chinese students by studying a case in a Sino-British cooperation university in China. The TNHE teachers' and non-Chinese classmates' views on Chinese students were collected and juxtaposed with Chinese students' own accounts. It is hoped that suggestions and implications made based on this case study can be useful for TNHE policymakers and educators to offer better instruction to Chinese students, and to shed light on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in various contexts with students from Confucian Heritage Cultures (CHC).

TNE and TNHE

Globalization has caused dramatic impacts in diverse domains, including the social, economic and political. It has also led the evolution of the knowledge-based economy towards the dissolution of ter-

19 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/understanding-chinese-learners-in-transnational-higher-education-in-china/316918

Related Content

King Abdulaziz University Path to the Excellence: Mapping between Accreditation and Ranking Systems

Abdulfattah S. Mashat and Habib M. Fardoun (2017). *World University Rankings and the Future of Higher Education* (pp. 436-471).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/king-abdulaziz-university-path-to-the-excellence/168200

A Module for General Education Curriculum Development in Chinese International Universities: A Practical Example Concerning Law and Morality

Kai Liu and Jie Yang (2023). *Handbook of Research on Developments and Future Trends in Transnational Higher Education* (pp. 1-20).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-module-for-general-education-curriculum-development-in-chinese-international-universities/316902

LGBT College Student Career Development: Goals and Recommendations for Faculty Members

Elizabeth L. Campbell and Michael A. Burrows (2020). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 29-40).

www.irma-international.org/article/lgbt-college-student-career-development/260947

A Cost-Effective Model to Address Student Readiness Through the Lens of a College Physics Course

Rebecca Forrest, Donna Pattison, Jacqueline Hawkins, Monica Martens, Laura Taylor Jacobs and Shuo Chen (2021). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 1-17).

www.irma-international.org/article/a-cost-effective-model-to-address-student-readiness-through-the-lens-of-a-college-physics-course/289945

Assessment of Theses in Design Education: Conceptualizing a Co-Creative Process for Grading by Automated Criteria Evaluation

Nina Svenningsson, Montathar Faraon and Victor Villavicencio (2021). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 1-17).

www.irma-international.org/article/assessment-of-theses-in-design-education/294567