

University of Windsor

Scholarship at UWindor

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Theses, Dissertations, and Major Papers

2016

Learning Experience of Chinese International Students in Master of Education Program at a Mid-Sized Ontario University

Tian Liu

University of Windsor

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd>

Recommended Citation

Liu, Tian, "Learning Experience of Chinese International Students in Master of Education Program at a Mid-Sized Ontario University" (2016). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 5841.

<https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd/5841>

This online database contains the full-text of PhD dissertations and Masters' theses of University of Windsor students from 1954 forward. These documents are made available for personal study and research purposes only, in accordance with the Canadian Copyright Act and the Creative Commons license—CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution, Non-Commercial, No Derivative Works). Under this license, works must always be attributed to the copyright holder (original author), cannot be used for any commercial purposes, and may not be altered. Any other use would require the permission of the copyright holder. Students may inquire about withdrawing their dissertation and/or thesis from this database. For additional inquiries, please contact the repository administrator via email (scholarship@uwindsor.ca) or by telephone at 519-253-3000ext. 3208.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE OF CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN
MASTER OF EDUCATION PROGRAM AT A MID-SIZED ONTARIO
UNIVERSITY

by

Tian Liu

A Thesis

Submitted to The Faculty of Graduate Studies

Through the Faculty of Education

In partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Master of Education at the

University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

© 2016 Tian Liu

Learning Experience of Chinese International Students in Master of
Education Program at a Mid-Sized Ontario University

by

Tian Liu

APPROVED BY:

Dr. Y. An
Odette Business School

Dr. G. Rideout
Faculty of Education

Dr. G. Zhou, Advisor
Faculty of Education

Jul 4, 2016

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, my thesis does not infringe upon anyone's copyright nor violate any proprietary rights and that any ideas, techniques, quotations, or any other material from the work of other people included in my thesis, published or otherwise, are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices.

I declare that this is a true copy of my thesis, including any final revisions, as approved by my thesis committee and the Graduate Studies office, and that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the learning experience of Chinese international students in the international cohort of Master of Education (M.Ed.) program at a mid-sized university in Ontario. Data were collected through survey and interviews. All students in international M.Ed. program (14) participated in the survey and 5 of them were interviewed later on. The exploration into the participants revealed that Chinese international students struggled with learning in Canadian tertiary study because of language barriers, cultural shock, different mindsets, unfamiliar curriculum, and a lack of cultural adjustment. These difficulties had made their academic and social lives challenging and influenced their academic achievement. Then corresponding strategies to cope with these challenges were reported. Finally, participants also provided their own suggestions to improve the international cohort of M.Ed. program in order to facilitate international students' academic achievement.

DEDICATION

To myself

To my parents

To all the people who helped me through this process

To all Chinese international students

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge my mentor and supervisor Dr. George Zhou, who stands at the forefront for providing support, encouragement and guidance during my M.Ed. studies and for encouraging me to pursue further graduate studies. Your genuine enthusiasm for teaching and research is unmatched.

I still remember the first time I met you and the opportunity you gave me to complement thesis under your supervision. Every time I felt lost, you would give me strength to carry on. Without your inspiration, guidance, encouragement, and dedication, this thesis would not have been possible.

I feel honored to have Dr. Glenn Rideout as my internal reader. You provided me helpful suggestions about research methods and designs, which made me realize how to conduct an academic research seriously. Thank you for your inspiration, support, encouragement and commitment.

My sincere thanks go to the external reader, Dr. Yunbi An, for the valuable insights and feedback to this research. I would also like to extend my thanks to the Chair of the Defense, Dr. Jonathan G. Bayley, for committing time and chairing the defense for this thesis.

My heartfelt thanks go to Mr. Jason Horn, who helped me a lot correcting grammar and expression issues, to Dr. Andrew Allen, who gave me inspiration to conduct

comparative research on cultural differences, to Dr. Benedicta Egbo, who taught me administrative theories.

My special thanks go to the Chinese international fellows that I interviewed for your trust, generous sharing your experience to me, your time and dedication to this research.

My friends deserve many thanks for being with me through all my thesis work, including Gavin Huang, Mac Ma, Rui Li, Haoyang Cen, Fuyan Sun, Peiyu Wang, Junyi Zhang, and May Ding.

I would like to pay tribute to my mon for her love, care and support. You are the love and power of my life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF APPENDICES	xiii
CHAPTER 1: Introduction	1
Background Information	1
Problem Statement	2
Research Questions	4
CHAPTER 2: Theoretical framework.....	5
Tinto’s Theory about Dropout Behavior.....	5
Berry’s Theory about Acculturation	7
CHAPTER 3: Literature Review	11
Current Situation of Diversity Education in Canadian Tertiary Study	11
Mindset and Learning Styles of Chinese International Students	14
Acculturation.....	18
Language Barriers	21
Social Adjustment	23
CHAPTER 4: Methodology.....	26
Research Design.....	26
Participants Recruitment.....	27

Data Collection	28
Survey Instrument	29
Ethics Concern	30
Data Analysis	31
Researcher's Role	31
CHAPTER 5: Survey Results	33
Demographics	33
Academic Challenges.....	34
Learning Habits.....	36
Social Life	37
Satisfaction.....	38
Inferential Analysis	40
CHAPTER 6: Interview Results	45
Background Information	45
Education Background.....	45
Reasons for Choosing the City/Canada	46
Challenges.....	47
Learning Strategies	49
Asking for Help.....	49
Time Spent Studying.....	51
Social Life	52
Making Native Friends	52
Going to Church.....	53
Volunteer Work	54

Perspectives.....	54
Courses.....	54
Differences between Canadian and Chinese Classes.....	58
Differences between Canadian and Chinese Learning Environments.....	59
Satisfaction.....	60
Benefits to Studying in Canada.....	60
Demerits to Studying in Canada.....	61
Changes Resulting from Studying in Canada.....	62
Plans for Future.....	63
Suggestion for the Program.....	63
CHAPTER 7: Discussion, Implication and Conclusion.....	65
Critical Reflections of the Researcher.....	75
Conclusion.....	76
REFERENCES.....	78
APPENDICES.....	90
Appendix A.....	90
Appendix B.....	94
Appendix C.....	95
Appendix D.....	96
Appendix E.....	97
Appendix F.....	100
Appendix G.....	103
VITA AUCTORIS.....	104

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Level of difficulty of courses in M.Ed. program.....	32
Table 2: Ways of making friends.....	34
Table 3: Satisfaction percentage of different factors	35
Table 4: Correlation coefficient of personal contacts with instructors and overall satisfaction of the program.....	37
Table 5: One-way ANOVA analysis of overall satisfaction by difficulty of communication.....	37
Table 6: Correlation coefficient of admission condition and gauged course difficulty	37
Table 7: Correlation coefficient of difficulties of communication and gauged courses difficulty.....	37

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Theoretical framework of Tinto.....6
Figure 2: Acculturation strategies of Berry.....8

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey for M.Ed. students.....	79
Appendix B: Interview questions for M.Ed. students.....	83
Appendix C: Recruitment letter for survey.....	84
Appendix D: Recruitment letter for interview.....	85
Appendix E: Consent form for survey.....	86
Appendix F: Consent form for interview.....	89
Appendix G: Consent for audio taping.....	92

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background Information

In recent years, an increasing number of international students have chosen Canada as their education destination. Based on the projection of OECD/World Bank (2007), in the first decade of the 21st century, the population of international students in Canada would be more than doubled, and among this fast-growing population, the largest numbers of international students are from China, India and Korea. Precisely, Asian students occupy 53% of all international students over the world (OECD/World Bank, 2007), and in Canada, the number of Chinese international students reaches 17,934, which is the biggest ethnical group on Canadian campuses (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011). Furthermore, in North America's tertiary educational system, approximately 80% of Chinese students currently studying are postgraduate students (Huang & Klinger, 2006). Such a fast-growing population deserves special attention.

Studying abroad brings benefits to learners as it is perceived as cultural enrichment and improves learners' language skills, while providing them with high-status qualifications and a competitive edge to access better jobs (OECD, 2004). Studying abroad helps students to expand their knowledge of other societies, languages, cultures and business methods, and allows them to leverage their labor market prospects (OECD, 2004). Moreover, declines in the costs of international travel and communications also make it easier for students to study abroad.

Problem Statement

Klein, Miller, and Alexander (1981) indicates that Chinese language, culture, social structure, and political ideology are quite different from Western countries. Thus Chinese students' cross-cultural experiences in Western countries are most likely to be challenging. Relevant research that investigates the lives of Chinese students has found some differences between these students and their Canadian peers (Dyson, 2001). For example, they are less likely to participate in class or demonstrate creativity. Moreover, tension between the Canadian style of teaching and Chinese learners has received increasing concern as Chinese learners struggle with unfamiliar activities and cultures in Canadian graduate education (Dyson, 2001). Additionally, Canadian educators are also unfamiliar with Chinese students (Harris, 2012). Western education is known as student-centered, quality-oriented, while Chinese education has long been considered teacher centered, content-based and exam-oriented (Wang & Kreysa, 2006).

Therefore, although Chinese international students are usually perceived as diligent, they are often seen as passive learners, lack creativity, and still hold the tradition of cramming that emphasizes memorization of learning material (Wheeler, 2002). According to Marton (1996), in Hong Kong and mainland China, both Chinese learners and teachers view memorizing and comprehending as an "interlocking processes" that complement each other. Dahlin and Watkins (2000) also conclude that Chinese students regard comprehension as a long-term process that requires significant mental effort while Western students typically view it as insight. Moreover, Chinese people tend to consider

success as the result of hard work instead of capacity itself (Li, 2003). There is Chinese saying that there is no hard job in the world but lazy people.

Most Chinese students have experienced isolation from dominant culture. Trice (2007) identified language, cultural differences, and discrimination as difficulties to integration in host culture. As a result, many teachers report frustration in reaching Chinese students in classrooms since they seem reluctant to participate in learning activities (Li, 2003).

Previous study explored learning experience of first-year undergraduate students under the same context regarding their academic struggle. But there is limited research focusing on only graduate students. Thus, this research specifically focussed on an international cohort of the Master of Education (M.Ed.) program at a mid-sized Ontario University, in which all the students were female and from mainland China. Students in the international cohort were eligible to choose their own area of concentration from two options: educational administration and curriculum studies. The international cohort was originally designed for all international students, but actually the program is full of Chinese students. Generally speaking, there were several differences between the international cohort and domestic or general M.Ed. cohort. Firstly and obviously, because all the students were from China, international cohort lacked cultural diversity. Secondly, the courses in the international cohort were pre-assigned and compulsory although the program offered two options for study concentrations. In contrast, students in the general cohort were eligible to make decisions from a list of compulsory and optional courses depending on their interest. Thirdly, the international cohort is exclusively course-based,

which restricted student learning experience to course based, as opposed to thesis or major options. Students had the option to apply to switch to the domestic cohort if they wished to complete a thesis or major paper, which required higher English language proficiency.

In the context of international M.Ed. program in a mid-sized Ontario university, the purpose of this research was to investigate students' learning experience, perceptions of the challenges they faced and the corresponding coping strategies they used to facilitate their academic achievement. The findings of this study aim to help Chinese international students adjust to the North American educational environment and improve the services and academic programs North American universities provide to overseas learners.

Research Questions

My investigation was guided by the following three questions:

1. What were Chinese international students' experience and perceptions about the international M.Ed. program?
2. What challenges did Chinese international students experience for their learning in this program?
3. What were the corresponding strategies that Chinese international students used to cope with such challenges?

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical framework

Tinto's Theory about Dropout Behavior

Tinto (1975) formulated a theoretical model that explains the processes of interaction between the individual and the institution that lead differing individuals to drop out from higher education institutions, and identifies those processes that result in definably different forms of dropout behaviors. This theoretical model has its roots in Durkheim's theory (1961) of suicide as it is currently modified by work in social psychology about individual suicide.

According to Durkheim (1961), one can reasonably expect that social conditions affecting dropout from the social system of the college would resemble those resulting in suicide in the wider society; namely, insufficient interactions with others in the college and insufficient congruency with the prevailing value patterns of the college collectivity. It is suggested that lack of integration into the social system of the academic environment will lead to low commitment to the social system and the probability of dropout and the pursuit of alternative activities will increase.

As of the gradual process that leads to educational dropout or persistence, Tinto suggests not only individual background information need to be considered (such as sex, ability, social status, previous education background, community of residence, etc.), but also psychological and motivational factors (such as educational expectations and motivation for grades).

As shown in Figure 1, Tinto claims that dropout or persistence in higher education is an interrelation process between academic and social environment and individuals. During this process, the academic and social system gradually influences one's commitments and objectives, which are named social integration and academic integration in Tinto's framework (1975). Academic integration means the congruence of one's academic performance, attitude and effort with his/her learning climate and policies (Zhou, 2014). It is illustrated as intelligent development, grades, adjustment with tertiary academic policies, etc. In addition, social integration refers to how a student fits himself/herself socially on campus which depends on issues like interaction with faculties and instructors, extracurricular activities and informal peer association. Even though academic performance is the biggest determinant in dropout behavior, social integration has an impact on the extent of one's degree fulfillment and learning effort.

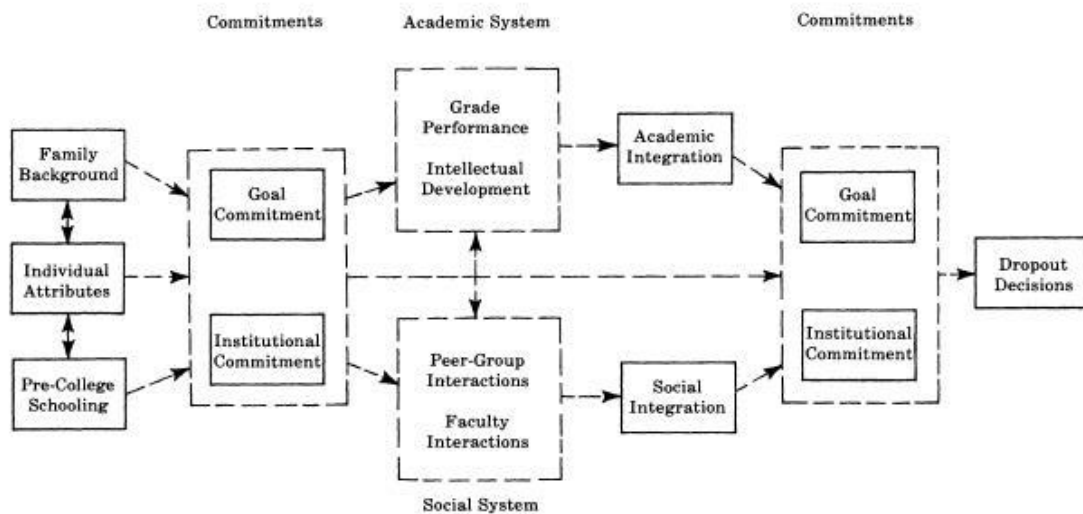


Figure 1
A conceptual Schema for Dropout from College

Figure 1. Theoretical Model of Dropout Behavior

Other than individual personalities, commitments and prior experiences directly influence the possibility of continuing in educational system. Additionally, the higher the degree of individual integration, the greater will be the commitment to the institution and goal of program completion.

Tinto's theory of student retention is used to understand and explain the in-class and extracurricular experiences of these graduate students (Tinto, 1993). This model regards students' academic and social integration and has been reviewed by many researchers due to its strong explanatory power in regards to interpreting student experiences (Kerka, 1995; Wortman & Napoli, 1996; Zhou & Zhang, 2014).

Berry's Theory about Acculturation

Acculturation was initially defined as a phenomenon where "groups of individuals" from different cultural backgrounds come into "continuous first-hand contact", with later alterations in the indigenous culture of these groups (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, as cited in Berry, 2008). Berry argues that acculturation includes themes broader than culture change, and that it is vital to recognize that acculturation is not only assimilation; it is a mutual process where changes emerge in both contact groups, rather than only within non-dominant groups.

Based on his earlier framework of acculturation attitudes, Berry (1997) makes several arguments about acculturation strategies. For example, he criticizes the assumption raised by Gordon (1964) that everyone is eventually assimilated into the dominant groups. The concept of acculturation strategies includes the different ways that individuals in both the dominant, or host groups, and the non-dominant, or immigrant groups, pursue

acculturation. At the culture level, the two groups have clear realization as to what they are trying to achieve, whether it be assimilation or another goal. At the individual level, people differ within their culture groups and their views can be shaped by factors such as educational background, occupation, gender, or sequence of birth. Berry (2005) argues that immediate outcomes of the acculturative behavior are what people attempt to do during this process, while long-term outcomes refer to what adaption goals are set by cultural groups.

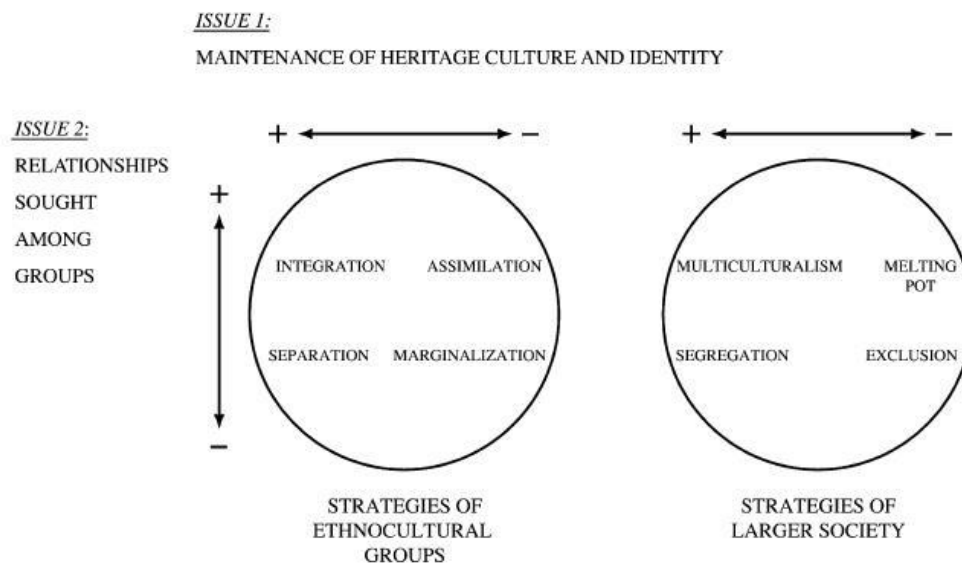


Figure 2. Acculturation strategies in ethno-cultural groups, and in the larger society

Based on two basic dimensions (non-dominant group and dominant group), Berry derives four acculturation strategies according to various factors like directions towards groups that individuals belong to, and towards the other groups (Berry, 1980). These various factors are identified as in two contrasting pairs of views: a preference to “maintain one’s indigenous culture and identity”, which stands in opposition to an “unwillingness to maintain them”; and a preference to build a “relationship with other

groups” and involve in the host society, which stands in contrast to the reluctance to engage in this relationship. The framework of these two dimensions is illustrated in Fig. 2 (Berry, 2008).

As indicated in Figure 2, eight strategies are named based on whether individuals in both the dominant and non-dominant groups are willing to maintain their heritage culture and identity and build relationships with people from the other group. For individuals in non-dominant group, the four strategies are: Assimilation, Separation, Integration, and Marginalisation; when it comes to the host culture, four strategies are namely: Multiculturalism, Melting Pot, Segregation, and Exclusion. In each cultural group, there are four strategies based on the extent of the willingness to maintain their own culture and build relationship. When people in the non-dominant ethno-cultural group, shown on the left of Figure 2, want to establish interaction with other cultures who do not maintain their indigenous culture, this strategy is referred to as Assimilation. In contrast, when individuals value their cultural identity, and they do not wish to build cross-cultural relationship, the Separation strategy is defined. Moreover, if someone is interested in both building new relationships in the host country and maintaining his/her original heritage culture, this is referred to as Integration. In most cases non-dominant groups are forced to acculturate in the dominant culture, so other definitions should be used. Integration only refers to active choices and successful adaptation of sojourners. Thus, in order to attain integration, a mutual accommodation of both cultural groups is essential, requiring acceptance by both cultural groups to admit each other’s cultural differences. That means the non-dominant group needs to adapt to the basics of social values in larger cultural environment, and the dominant group should be well prepared to

adapting themselves in culturally diverse institutions such as schools, and the workforce. Eventually, when there is barely interest in either cultural maintenance or establishment of social network, often due to discrimination, this is defined as Marginalisation. It is similar for individuals in dominant group during acculturation process, as demonstrated on the right side of Figure 2. If integration is sought by culturally dominant group, it is termed multiculturalism. When assimilation is pursued by dominant group, that is defined as a melting pot. When the dominant group enforces separation, it is called segregation. Finally, if marginalism takes place by dominant group, Berry defines this as Exclusion.

This framework helps researchers to not only understand but make comparisons between dominant groups and larger society, and between individuals and cultural groups they belong to in the process of acculturation.

CHAPTER 3

Literature Review

Since an increasing number of international students are pursuing their graduate degrees in Canadian campuses, educators need to customize their teaching strategies and establish a learning environment to benefit different learning groups (Halx, 2010).

Chinese learners struggle with unfamiliar activities and cultures in Canadian graduate education while Canadian educators are also unfamiliar with Chinese students (Harris, 2012).

This literature reviews the macro level of diversity education, then specifically, the Chinese students' learning situation in Canadian universities and the challenges they encounter inside and outside the classroom.

Current Situation of Diversity Education in Canadian Tertiary Study

Historically, students pursue further education by going abroad rather than staying in their own countries for developed and advanced educational opportunities, which allows them to differentiate themselves from other peers in their home countries. This idea is supported by Hegarty (2014), who notes that “international learners travel for the simple reason that they feel they can get a better education abroad which will differentiate them from their peers upon returning home”. In view of this assertion, universities in developed countries have increasing populations of international students.

Canada is known as a considerably diverse country. The increasing population is comprised of two main groups: immigration and increasing enrolment of international

students (Guo & Jamal, 2007). Because of the increasing enrollment of international students, educational institutes have begun to view international students as a source of additional revenues. As reported in the Canada's International Education Strategy Final Report (2012), international students' expenditure on tuition, accommodation, and living expenses have contributed more than 8 billion Canadian dollars to the economy in 2010. Moreover, it is predicted that international students will contribute more after they graduate, which will have a continuous benefit for the Canadian economy. In conclusion, since countries increasingly benefit from educational globalization, the competition to attract and retain students is a common concern of those international students, particularly among countries such as Britain, America, Australia, and Canada.

Unlike secondary schools, universities are more comprehensive, liberal and inclusive, and students are expected to be self-controlled, autonomous learners and course content often requires teamwork. Additionally, literacy requirements and evaluation criteria of various academic majors are different. For example, science students are expected to use practical skills to resolve daily life problems, while art students are expected to learn more about the past and future, and propose suggestions for existing governments by using a variety of theories. These differences are also observed in academic research and lectures (Carkin, 2005; McCallum, 2004). Fairclough (2000) states that "we are living through a period of intense social and cultural change which is pervasive and universal in its global, national and local effects, and which involves the breakdown and redrawing of boundaries and relationships of all sorts" (p. 163). He also claims that interpersonal communication alters not only in language groups, but various languages, dialects and discourses. Carkin (2005) and McCallum (2004) also argued that

post-secondary institutes are not exceptions in these changes and have become increasingly dependent on overseas learners to supplement domestic recruitment. This results in an increasing number of teaching and learning problems. The changing nature of academic environments must be accepted and schools need understanding and modified policies across all sectors of universities, not just within specific departments.

International students from diverse cultural backgrounds bring their indigenous knowledge, values, and culture to higher educational institutes in Canada. As a country that spends 4.9% of its GDP on education each year, teaching and learning cultural diversity is vital in Canada. Hegarty (2014) argued that international students were an essential part of higher education system, contending that university administrators must ensure they meet all the academic needs of international students. In addition, Roy (2013) emphasizes that through emotional intelligence, a creative mind, and respectful attitude, professors could reinforce the learning experiences of international learners. In the perspective of educators, teaching relevant knowledge to learners can help them develop their indigenous culture and achieve their academic goal, not to mention the hidden curriculum- values and conception in the schooling system (Canada's International Education Strategy Final Report, 2012). Otten (2003) identified that the objectives of intercultural education are to expand people's knowledge about their own and other cultures, influence their attitudes concerning foreign culture, and develop their interpersonal skills so that they are better able to interact effectively with people from other cultural backgrounds.

In conclusion, changing demographics in education requires more acceptances of diversity, multicultural competence, and social equity and justice among educators. Educators in America acknowledge that “democratic and human rights demand that existing educational program structures and practices need to be reformed in order to make them more accessible and responsive to groups that historically have been oppressed, silenced, and disenfranchised educationally, economically, and politically” (Gay, 1995).

Mindset and Learning Styles of Chinese International Students

In this section Chinese styles of mindset and the corresponding learning styles of Chinese students are reviewed. Even though Chinese students go abroad for post-secondary studies, Chinese pedagogical approaches are still influential with respect to their overseas learning experiences. Studies indicate the significance of Confucian ideology in Chinese learners’ mindset (Tweed & Lehman, 2002). Confucius (551-479BC) was a great educator and philosopher who proposed diligent learning, respectfulness to knowledge, and practical capacity and behavioral principals (2002). Educational theories based on Confucian values view hard work as a means to success. The ultimate aim of the “pragmatic learning” of essential knowledge is individual fulfillment within civil service. Confucius also insisted that “behavioral reform is the final goal of education and a decent behavior can result in individual success and harmonious society” (p. 92). Confucian ideology has an essential influence on Chinese even Easterners’ mindsets, behaviors, teaching, and learning methodologies. Thus, when Chinese students come to Canadian universities, they bring their Confucian-oriented

thinking to their studies, whilst their instructors and peers may have Western Style of mindset. For example, according to Liu (1994), an American professor questioned why “Chinese students in his classes always answer ‘yes’ when he asks them whether they understand my requests or not” when he “can tell from their assignments that they are not really clear”. Researchers informed him that in China it would be embarrassing or shameful to admit one’s ignorance in public. This was not an isolated case and happened quite often. These international students are unfamiliar and may be uncomfortable with Canadian culture, and especially Canadian academic environment, which makes their learning experiences challenging.

Besides Confucian mindset and corresponding learning styles, overseas students also tend to work with peers from the same cultural background (Rienties, et al., 2012). Research indicated that during 14 weeks, international students were capable to cooperate well with domestic students, but when it came to higher projection, international students worked better with international students who share similar experiences and cultures. One’s background knowledge and ideology can impact one’s engagement and commitment to teamwork. Based on this observation, researchers argued that “instructional design of group work has a strong influence on how international and domestic students work and learn together” (Rienties, et al., 2012). This statement emphasizes the importance of classroom instructions when engaging students from various backgrounds. In order for these students to achieve academic success and remain competitive in international education, administrators in developed countries need to facilitate a diverse learning environment where international learners can communicate

with domestic students as well as fellow peers. Also, international students need to take advantage of the assigned opportunities to work with their domestic counterparts.

Compared with Western education, Chinese education has long been considered teacher-centered, content-based, and exam-oriented (Wang & Kreysa, 2006). Thus, Chinese international students are usually seen as assiduous, but also impassive and uncreative, as well as excessively focused on memorization and repetition (Wheeler, 2002). A study conducted in the UK found that most Chinese students view learning as a process of constant revision and reviewing (Lihong & Michael, 2011). They believe that repetitive learning is necessary in order to deepen their understanding of a subject. Some participants quoted a phrase from the Analects of Confucius to emphasize this point, noting that they “gain new insights by reviewing old materials”. Exams were taken as a means to this end (Lihong & Michael). This is encapsulated by the old expression, “the more pain you suffer, the higher class you can be in”, which represents this learning ideology (Lihong & Michael).

Furthermore, from the perspective of learning attitude, Chinese students often emphasize learning from others with modesty and humility (Xiaojing & Richard, 2012). There is consensus among the participants that as a student one should always be modest in seeking knowledge and be respectful to the teacher. Researchers indicate that some teachers believe in “setback education” in early schooling, which alludes to impairing the self-esteem and self-confidence of the student in order to build their willpower and guard against self-inflation. Children are brought up to be respectful to elders, parents, and teachers, and that is perceived to be a national virtue. All the participants in Xiaojing and

Richard's research believed that Chinese teachers like docile students, and that leaving a good impression on the teacher is vital. Inquisitive and assertive students are considered nuisances in a Chinese class (Xiaojing & Richard). Similarly, Upton (1989) claimed that Chinese learners had a negative reaction towards American students' behaviors in classes, such as when they challenge instructors, make jokes, or are tardy, as these behaviors are regarded as rude and disrespectful in Chinese culture. Chinese students also complained about American peers' self-centeredness. Upton (1989) reported that one international student said that domestic students "come to classes as unique individuals studying whatever courses interest them, and do not care about public opinions." In contrast, Chinese students do care what teachers and other students think of them. Upton points out that in North America, teachers work as facilitators of learning rather than academic authorities. They value independent thinking, critical opinions, innovative ideas, and group discussion. However, Chinese students are indifferent to participation in class discussion since they just want to listen to what the teacher says and take notes. Other literature on Chinese students has recorded their polite submissive classroom behavior (Durkin, 2008a, 2008b; Jones, 1999), which tends to be attributed to their value of social harmony. That is likely true in their home university classroom, because both the teacher's authority and the student's subordination have long been institutionalized. This concept directly influences their performance in class, even when they are studying abroad in drastically different pedagogical and ideological educational settings.

While awareness of Chinese mindset and learning styles are important, researchers also highlighted that students' prior academic background could predict their academic performance in overseas education. For instance, McKenzie and Schweitzer (2001)

categorized achievement predictors into four factors: academic, psychosocial, cognitive, and demographic. They indicated that a student's past academic performance was essential to forecasting their future academic achievement at the post-secondary level study. However, prior academic performance does not always result in high academic achievement. Burch (2008) found that most first-year graduate students did not do well in studies, likely because they used previous learning strategies in their new academic environment and ended up failing to secure the same results. Therefore, whether prior knowledge can effectively predict future learning outcome varies depending on factors such as pedagogy, academic environment, and curriculum setting. It is possible for a smart Chinese student to struggle with his/her studies in a different educational context.

Acculturation

Acculturation is a bi-dimensional process that is defined as “the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members”, which is also a stress reaction responding to life events based on experiences of acculturation (Berry, 2005, p. 698). According to Berry's framework of acculturation (1997), acculturation at group-level means that sojourner groups often change substantially due to living with two different cultural influences. These alterations include social, economic, religious, language, value and cultural changes.

Ryder, Alden, Paulhus, and Dere (2013) evaluated the effectiveness of acculturation as a predictor of interpersonal adjustment. They argued “social adjustment, although critical to the acculturation process, has been relatively neglected” (p. 502). Smith and

Khawaja (2011) identified acculturation as a process of shifting international students' experience when they get adjusted to a new culture. The process requires them to fit their social and psychological behavior into the dominant culture and value of the society. Moreover, Perkins's research has indicated that international students who come from non-European backgrounds, less developed countries and/or Eastern countries, tend to suffer more pressure when adjusting to North American campus life (1977). China meets all three criteria: a non-European, developing, Eastern country; hence, Chinese students are likely to encounter a greater degree of challenges and difficulties than students from any one of those three backgrounds ordinarily encounter. Preliminary research has found that factors that influence the acculturation process of Asian students include language barriers, educational experiences, social and cultural encounters, and financial constraints (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Yuan, 2011).

Samovar and Porter (1991) claimed that there were maximum sociocultural differences between Western and Asian countries, such as America and China. Previous research has suggested that there is a strong relationship between the degree of cultural distance and the degree of psychosocial stressors experienced in cross-cultural transition (Ward, 1996). In other words, Chinese international students suffer more from cultural gap than peers from Western educational backgrounds in North America.

The transition from Eastern culture to Western culture can be difficult given that Chinese international students have to learn to communicate in and adjust themselves to a new language, all while in a new environment with different cultural norms and adjusting to having left their families, friends, and support networks behind. Dao (2007) and Ying

(2006) reported that, during this process, lower levels of acculturation may likely lead to higher levels of stress, distress, and depression. Precisely, research regarding international students from Taiwan and Korea has shown that acculturative stress positively predicts depression (Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004). These international learners may feel overwhelmed and doubtful of their capacities when encountering acculturative stress. Since Asian culture tend to emphasize emotional self-control (Kim, Li, & Ng, 2005), they believe in their inner resources to relieve stress or emotional burdens associated with things like homesickness. Nevertheless, not all acculturative stressors are related to inner resources, and external issues might not be dealt with easily by self-control alone.

However, Lin (2012) and Yan and Berliner (2011) found that as these sojourns persist longer, their frustration and anxiety regarding language barriers, academic challenges, and acculturation problems will be significantly reduced.

Furthermore, establishing a brand new social network in foreign country is an important criterion of acculturation. It takes time and effort for international students from diverse cultures to develop friendship, which is often tougher than they can anticipate. As a result, many international students tend to stay with people from similar cultural background (Yuanyuan, X., 2015). Alternately, building friendship does not depend on one's desire, but rather a mutual willingness (Wenli, Y., 2011). For instance, Chinese students in America reported that their peers knew little about China and held some negative stereotypes about Chinese people. There are many factors contributing to international adaption (Bart, B. et al., 2012). Tsang (2001) developed a model of

fundamental elements that have a direct impact on international adjustment of Chinese sojourners, including such factors as self-efficacy, language proficiency, prior international experience, and association with locals, and social support.

Language Barriers

Those students for whom English is a second language (ESL) have to illustrate required English language proficiency in order to be admitted to post-secondary schools. For many universities, English language proficiency is judged by a single measure – standardized tests such as International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Johnson (2008) indicates that many instructors are confused with the insufficient language proficiency that international students show during their learning in academic programs, especially if they have passed standardized tests before enrolment. This means they are capable to linguistic demands of post-secondary studies. It is significant for teachers to know what standardized tests can or cannot measure. According to Johnson (2008), “There is no almighty test”. Although there have been recent revisions to both tests, including making them more reflective of daily communicative language in use, the foundation remains that even the best standardized test cannot effectively measure the range of academic competencies required for post-secondary studies (Green, 2005; Weigle, 2004). Moreover, being a student studying in academic content in English is obviously much more difficult than just being an English learner.

Language proficiency has been widely considered to be a significant issue that affects international student’s adjustment (Ling Eleanor, Z. & Vesa, P., 2015). Whether

one can function effectively when pursuing academic goals and handling social life largely depends on the language competence of the individual. Huang (2006) conducted a study about academic listening challenges of Chinese students at an American university. He found that these participants were more confident about their reading ability and grammar structure, which might better explain the reason why they achieved high scores on the TOEFL or IELTS. Their weaknesses were speaking and listening. Most Chinese students also felt frustration about their pronunciation, vocabulary and writing skills.

For mainland Chinese students, English is a second language that they learn in school and is rarely used in daily life. In addition to this, English teaching in schooling is exam-oriented, and written tests are far less conducive to developing listening and speaking skills than are oral exams. Therefore, oral English is usually a weakness of most mainland Chinese students, which largely influences effective communication in both academic and social atmospheres. English proficiency is a major resource for adaptation. Empirical studies indicate that foreign students who report superior English ability are more likely to be better adjusted both academically and socially (Yang & Clum, 1995; Ying & Liese, 1991).

Related studies found that students believe their lack of background knowledge within specific subjects is strongly problematic (Johnson, 2008). Zhou and Zhang (2014) conducted investigation on first-year international students in a Canadian university in Ontario, using mixed- methods design to combine online survey and focus group discussions. Participants of various nationalities in first-year undergraduate programs took part in the study. Even though many undergraduate international students are fluent

in English and feel comfortable using English for academic purposes, a variety of problems adjusting to the new school life in Canada still exist. Their report confirms that there are other factors besides the language ability that influence international students' acculturation. Johnson (2008) interviewed his research participants and reported that even though they can deal with English at the vocabulary level, it is difficult to understand the hidden discourse and different accents. Moreover, due to lack of confidence in their oral English, they prefer to clarify course requirement or assignments via emails rather than face-to-face discussion with instructors.

Social Adjustment

Once abroad, students must deal with not only academic issues, but financial and daily issues by themselves, rather than relying on their parents. They have to adjust socio-culturally and psychologically to the new environment (Ward & Kennedy, 2001). Chinese culture is universally considered to be collective, contrasting to Western culture (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992). Chinese culture values the needs of the group and also emphasizes obligation and interdependence (Hui & Triandis, 1986). In contrast, Western culture encourages individual growth and personal achievement. In this case, international learners might encounter conflicts regarding different cultural contexts and values when they are trying to get involved in social activities. Stress related to separation from their home and families is combined with the pressures associated with assimilation into a different education system, the requirements linked with living independently, and the establishment of social networks with local people (Trice, 2007). Moreover, Padilla and Perez (2003) point out that parental expectations and the pressure to succeed also play a

role in the stress endured by Chinese students. These issues may influence international learners' willingness to assimilate themselves in foreign countries.

Searle and Ward (1990) claim that the adaptation of international students includes three aspects: the emotional, the affective, and the behavioral. In order for Chinese international learners to achieve primary mission, research suggests that international students turn to various on-campus organizations (Lin, 2008). These on-campus networks help students get through mentally and socio-culturally difficult periods.

Besides on-campus service, friendship with peers in academic environment might enhance students' global self-esteem and provide emotional backup. In their book *Why Can't We Be Friends*, William and Johnson (2011) explore the relationship between international students and American students. The main idea of their research is that international students who build friendship with domestic peers benefit from less "acculturative stress" and higher academic achievement than those who do not have such relationships. Moreover, domestic students can develop diversity awareness and multicultural skills by being ready for the globalized market. However, they realized that the establishment of international friendship is "challenging and rare" because of prejudicial attitudes or problematic intercultural relations (William & Johnson, 2011). Ie (2009) reinforces that establishing friendship between domestic and international learners is difficult. Such challenge has been reported in the literature (Zhang and Zhou, 2010; Zhou and Zhang, 2014). Difficulties that international learners may be ascribed to various factors. Lin (2002) and Wan (2001) indicated that the lack of common hobbies and mutual understanding between Chinese learners and Canadian peers can result in

communication difficulties. For instance, in Canada people talk about hockey and soccer as the most popular sports; while in China people talk about ping-pong and badminton, and Chinese students have little knowledge about hockey. Cultural gap can also be perceived in holiday celebrations and religious beliefs (Feng, 1991). Chinese international students are usually in class on Chinese holidays. They usually do not have the chance to get fully involved in holiday atmosphere during Canadian statutory holidays.

Based on the preceding research, establishing friendship between international students and domestic peers seems difficult. University policies should take diversities and cultural conflicts into account to facilitate better adaptation of international students including creating more opportunity for the contacts between international students with domestic students (Bodycott, 2012). Lastly, on-going parental support is vital in terms of both financial and psychological aspects. Research based on the relationship between parent support and student adjustment shows that parent support, clinical maladjustment (a measure of internalizing problems) and emotional symptoms are significantly relevant (Demaray et al., 2005). Moreover, the relationship between parent support and academic well-being was investigated in a large sample of Latino youth by De Garmo & Martinez (2006). This study indicated a major effect as well as a stress-coping role of parent support. Academic achievement was assessed by four variables: GPA, frequency of homework completion, students' evaluations of their own academic performance, and how likely the student was to drop out of school. Similarly, researchers found that parent support was essentially related to higher level of academic achievement (Demaray & Malecki, 2011).

CHAPTER 4

Methodology

The study was conducted in a mid-sized city in Ontario, which is the fourth most diverse city in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2008). This made it one of ideal places to investigate the international learning experience of Chinese students. This chapter provides an overview of the methodology in this study. The following sections includes: research design, participants, demographic data, data collection, instruments, ethics concern, data analysis and research's role.

Research Design

The study was conducted in a mid-sized city in Ontario. According to Zhong and Zhou (2011), it is becoming a popular destination for Chinese students due to its mild winter, proximity to America, relatively low prices, and its relatively large Chinese community.

The purpose of this study was to explore the learning experience of Chinese graduate students who were enrolled in an international cohort, the academic challenges they encountered, and the corresponding coping strategies they employed in order to improve academic achievement. The researcher used mixed-method to collect data from participants. According to Creswell (2007), a mixed method design is useful to combine the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to interpret research questions well. It helps researcher not only generalize the findings, but also develops thorough insights as to the meaning of a phenomenon or concept for individuals. This study adopted an explanatory mixed methods design with the first phase of quantitative

study and the second phase of qualitative study. In the first phase, survey was used to collect data. In the second phase, data were collected through interviews. The interview data provided in-depth understanding about the findings from the survey.

Participants Recruitment

Firstly, the researcher sent invitation via social network to all the participants. And participants knew the researcher since they used to be classmates, therefore, all of them agreed to participate in the survey. Participants of the survey included all fourteen female students in the M. Ed. program. Four students were selected for the interview. All participants were from the same international cohort of the M.Ed. program, which started from July, 2014. Some of them came to Canada right before the program started, and others came earlier for the English Language Improvement Program (ELIP), but each of them had been in Canada for no more than two years and this program was first degree they would receive in Canada.

The information about interview participant recruitment was released when they participated in the survey. After this, some students contacted the researcher and volunteered to participate. The interviews were held, one at a time and by appointment, and took approximately one hour for each participant. Interview locations were chosen based on convenience, comfort and privacy, and primarily took place at the participants' homes. Since each of the participants identified Mandarin as their first language, the interviews were conducted in Mandarin. All interviews were audio-taped for transcription.

Before the interview, an information letter (Appendix E&F) was distributed to the

participants. Participants were required to sign consent forms were required for both participation, and for audio-taping (Appendix G). Based on the responses from each participant, the researcher followed up with probe questions, allowing participants to freely express their perceptions, experiences, and interpretations in more details. Interview questions were provided to interviewees in advance in case they felt uncomfortable about some sensitive questions.

Data Collection

In this study, the researcher firstly surveyed the entire cohort with questionnaires. Participants were grouped together to fill in Afterwards, four participants from this pool were recruited to be interviewed, sharing insight about their experiences.

A survey was conducted to collect quantitative data about participants' learning styles, their degree of satisfaction with the program, and general information about their social lives and academic challenges. Demographic data was also collected in the survey, which included their original hometown, educational background, IELTS or TOFEL scores, over all GPA, and the duration of time they had spent in Canada, among other details. Creswell (2008) also indicated that, "surveys help to identify important beliefs and attitudes of individuals, and provide useful information to evaluate programs in schools". Since there was inadequate literature on either international branch of academic program or M.Ed. program, this study was regarded as open-ended, explanatory investigation. Due to its nature, a qualitative study was also necessary to explore students' in-depth opinions, struggles and constructive suggestions during their learning process. Qualitative research emphasizes the procedure, instead of the results of

participants' experience (Creswell, 2007). It is also beneficial as it allows researchers to collect in-depth data by asking questions and listening to participants' opinions in their own language and on their own terms, which allows for more authentic responses (Patto, 2002, as cited in Zhong, 2011).

Four students were interviewed to collect in-depth data about participants' learning experience, which provided further details and explanation about survey findings.

The researcher also kept field notes during the research process. After finishing an interview, the researcher recorded detailed descriptions of the interviewees, time, location, and specific conversations. Field notes served as a reminder to recall what happened in the interview when the researcher transcribed the interview tapes and analyzed the transcripts.

Survey Instrument

Five aspects of information were explored through this survey (Appendix A): participants' demographic information, challenges they encounter during learning in M.Ed. program, corresponding strategies and learning habits, how they fit in socially with the academic environment, and their satisfaction with the program. Some of the survey questions were adapted from the instrument Zhou (2014) used, and some extra questions were designed by researcher in order to address the characteristics of study's participants. These surveys were done in a paper-pencil format.

The survey was anonymous and in English. It consisted of 21 questions in total and required approximately 15 minutes to complete. Before the final version of the survey

was administered, the draft questionnaire was reviewed by a couple of faculty members who have extensive experiences in researching sojourn experiences in Canada. Before distributing the survey, the researcher secured a clearance letter (Appendix H) from the Research Ethic Board (REB) of the university. Brief information about this study was announced before the survey administration. The verbal announcement and an information letter (Appendix C) both indicated that the return of survey should imply the participants' consent.

Interview Protocol

A semi-structured interview was used as an important method of data collection in the second phase of the study. The purpose of the qualitative phase was to provide a deeper understanding of findings of the quantitative phase of this study. The benefit of semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was that it provided enough room for participants to interpret questions asked and express their general views or opinions in details. It also allowed the researcher to have some control over the flow of the topics (Berg, 2007). The interview protocols (Appendix B) included 14 questions developed from the results of the quantitative study.

Ethics Concern

To gain support from the participants, researcher needs to communicate to participants that they are participating in a study and inform them of the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2008). With the pre-announcement and participants' permission, the interviews were recorded by the researcher for data analysis. Participants were promised that the information they provide would be kept confidential. None of the names of

participants, their friends, or their teachers would be reported. Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes.

Another ethical issue was that, “it may be necessary to clearly define [my] role as a researcher (not a therapist offering advice or a judge evaluating the circumstances) because of the deep personal relationships that can form through the qualitative research process” (Patton, 2002, as cited in Creswell, 2008).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected from the survey were inputted into the SPSS database. In the process of entering the data, a numerical code for each close-ended answer was assigned. Both descriptive and inferential analysis was conducted to interpret the data using the SPSS. Thus, frequency tables for each question item were generated.

The researcher analyzed the qualitative data from interviews by going through each interview several times and conducting an analysis each time. Every time after reading the database, a deeper understanding was developed about the information provided by participants (Creswell, 2008, p237). After this initial review, the interview data was coded and categorized while the researcher attempted to identify emerging patterns and themes. This inductive data analysis was also on-going throughout the data collection process.

Researcher's Role

Based on the previous studies, the researcher is regarded as the primary instrument in a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, it is acknowledged that researcher's

personal experience and values cannot be separated from the investigation process, but rather will impact on the research process, from data collection and analysis, to its interpretation (Creswell, 2008; Agar, M., 1988).

As a researcher in this topic, I was in the M.Ed. (international) program for two semesters, which allows me to experience similar academic challenges and acculturation issues the participants may also encounter. My personal experience inspires me to conduct this research, but also gives me an in-depth understanding of the topic. Furthermore, as a Chinese international student in Canada with such a diverse culture, I have developed my own perspectives on conflicts between Chinese traditional value and current Western values. Specifically, this study refers to conflicts between Chinese traditional thinking methods, learning styles, and interpersonal relationship, and how they correspond with Western styles. On the other side, avoiding side effects of dual role in research is essential. In order to be objective as a primary researcher, I always reminded myself not to let my personal perspectives overwrite relevant participants' experiences from data collection to data analysis and interpretation.

CHAPTER 5

Survey Results

Using a sequential explanatory mixed methods model, the researcher examined the learning experience of Chinese international students in the M.Ed. program (international cohort). This chapter presents the quantitative results of the study, beginning with the demographic characteristics of the participants, followed by the quantitative findings. These findings included four categories: (1) the academic challenges that Chinese international students encountered; (2) their corresponding learning habits and strategies; (3) how they fitted in socially with the academic environment; and (4) their satisfaction with the program.

Demographics

Gender, Age, and Years of Residence in Canada

The survey's participants consisted of 14 students in the international cohort who started in 2014. All of the participants were female: 57% were in their early 20s, and 43% were between 26 to 30 years old. The average length of time that each participant had been living in Canada was 20 months.

English Proficiency

About 79% of participants were required to take a language improvement program before enrolling in the graduate courses, while 21% of them were offered the direct access to graduate program. This means that before enrolling in the international cohort of the M.Ed. program, 21% of candidates either scored 7.0 or higher on the IELTS

without scoring lower than 6.0 in any given section, or scored 100 or more on TOFEL without scoring less than 25 in any given sections.

Academic Challenges

Communication Difficulty

In this section, 3 participants (21%) reported that they had no difficulty communicating with native English speakers at all; 9 (64%) participants said that they used to have difficulty having conversation with them, but found communication easy at the time of the survey; and 2 (15%) participants thought it was still difficult for them to communicate at the time of the survey.

Course Difficulty

The researcher used a 5-point Likert Scale to value the difficulty of courses from “very easy” to “very tough”. Of the 14 participants, 21% gauged the courses as “easy”; 71% of the participants thought courses in the M.Ed. program “all right”; and 8% of the participants felt the courses were “tough”. None of the participants chose “very easy” or “very tough”.

Challenging Factors

Participants were asked to rank five factors that that contribute to the difficulty of courses, with “1” representing the most significant factor, and “5” for the least significant factor. One participant mentioned “cultural shock” as an additional factor that made courses difficult.

As shown in Table 1, the highest percentage of participants thought lack of class participation (57%) and too much required reading (57%) made courses difficult. And 28 percent of participants evaluated too many writing assignments as an important factor contributing to courses difficulty. Among these five factors, “insufficient communication with instructors” was least recognized (50% of participants chose 1 and 2).

Asking for Help

This question asked whom participants would ask for help when they had academic difficulties. About 71% of participants turned to their peers; 21% would ask instructors for help; and 7% of them would use campus support service regarding academic problems.

Table 1. Level of difficulty of courses in M.Ed. program

	1	2	3	4	5
Too much required reading	21.4	21.4	0	35.7	21.4
Too many writing assignments	14.3	21.4	35.7	14.3	14.3
Not used to instructional approaches	7.1	21.4	25.7	28.6	7.1
Low class participation	7.1	7.1	28.6	14.3	42.9
Insufficient communication with instructors	21.4	28.6	14.3	7.1	28.6

Learning Habits

Time Spent on Study

When asked how much time they spent on studying each week, 64% of participants stated that they worked 5 to 10 hours weekly; 14% of them reported 10 to 15 hours; 14% reported more than 15 hours; and 8% of the participants said that they spent less than 5 hours on study every week.

Place to Study

In response to being asked where they usually study, 57% said they preferred studying alone in a private setting; 35% said they preferred to study with friends on campus; and 8% of them chose to study alone on campus.

Personal Contact with Instructors

Among those who had responded to this question, about 64% admitted that they rarely had personal contact with instructors excluding course-related contacts; but 36% claimed they sometimes had personal contact with instructors; and 29% of participant did not have personal relationship with instructors at all.

Preference of Class Types

This question asked whether Participants were asked if they preferred mixed classes with domestic students, or classes where the students came from the international cohort exclusively. All the participants said they preferred mixed classes with both international and domestic students.

In conclusion, most Chinese international students tended to work 5 to 10 hours weekly on studies, and they preferred to study alone in privately; most participants hardly had personal, extracurricular interaction with professors. Regarding their preferences of class types, all the participants chose mixed-classes with both domestic and international peers.

Social Life

This section assesses how Chinese international students fit in with the Canadian academic environment by asking whether they made friends from the local community.

English-speaking Friends

When asked if they had native English-speaking friends, 50% of the participants reported having one or two native English-speaking friends; 36% of them had more than two; and 14% reported that they did not have any native English-speaking friends.

Ways of Making Friends

Table 2 shows how participants make friends, whether native English speakers, or fellow students from the international cohort, in the academic environment. About 43% of participants developed friendships with students who shared common classes, another 43% of them knew their friends from off-campus event; and 7% of participants meet friends from campus events. 7% chose the “not applicable” option.

Table 2. Ways of Making Friends

	Frequency	Percentage	Effective percentage	Accumulative percentage
In a class	6	42.9	42.9	42.9
During campus event	1	7.1	7.1	50.0
Social off campus	6	42.9	42.9	92.9
Not applicable	1	7.1	7.1	100.0
In total	14	100.0	100.0	

In summary, it was uncommon for surveyed Chinese international students to build network with native English-speaking peers; and they often built new network through common classes with domestic students and off-campus events.

Satisfaction

To investigate how students felt about international cohort of M.Ed. program, they were asked what their level of satisfaction was regarding seven different factors, which included curriculum, class instruction, professor guidance, faculty support, academic environment, social environment, and overall satisfaction.

Satisfaction of various factors

Table 3 illustrates how participants evaluated different factors, from curriculum

setting to campus environment. With respect to curriculum, 28.6% of participants reported to be little satisfied with the curriculum, 35.7% of participants felt somewhat satisfied, and another 37.5% were satisfied. Moreover, 57.1% were satisfied with classroom instruction, and 35.7% were somewhat satisfied, while 7.1% were only a 'little' satisfied. Professor guidance ranked slightly higher, with 7.1% of participants reporting that they were very satisfied; 35.7% reporting that they were satisfied, 50% reporting that they were somewhat satisfied, and 7.1% reporting that they were a 'little' satisfied. Regarding support from the faculty, the options for a 'little', somewhat satisfied, and satisfied were each selected by 28.6% of participants. In terms of campus environment, more than 70% participants were satisfied with the academic environment, among which 20% were 'very' satisfied; however, only around 64% of them were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with social environment.

First Choice

Half of the participants said that this program was their first choice when pursuing international education, while the other half claimed it was not the first choice.

Recommending the Program

Participants were asked whether they were willing to recommend this program to others, with 79% answering "not sure", 14% responding with a firm no; and only 7% asserting that they would recommend the program.

Table 3. Satisfaction percentage of different factors

	Not at all satisfied	Little	Somewhat	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Curriculum	0	28.6	35.7	35.7	0
Class instruction	0	7.1	35.7	57.1	0
Professor guidance	0	7.1	50.0	35.7	7.1
Faculty support	0	28.6	28.6	28.6	14.3
Academic environment	0	7.1	21.4	50.0	21.4
Social environment	0	7.1	28.6	57.1	7.1
Overall program	0	7.1	50.0	42.9	0

In conclusion, among all influential factors, academic environment and social environment were most appreciated by participants. And half of participants were satisfied with the overall M.Ed. program while 43 percent of them chose “somewhat” option. Additionally, about 80% of participants reported “not sure” whether they would recommend the program to others.

Inferential Analysis

Results from Spearman’s correlation coefficients indicated that personal contacts with instructors positively correlated with students’ overall satisfaction with the program

($r=0.299$). However, maybe because of small study samples, the correlation did not show any statistically significance (Table 4).

One-way ANOVA tests (Table 5) were firstly conducted to compare perceived difficulty of communication among participants' overall satisfaction of M.Ed. program (Table 5). The variable measuring participants' frequency of difficulty levels was namely: (a) "no difficulty" (at all); (b) "yes, but not now" means participants used to have difficulties communicating with native English speakers, but now they have figured it out; (c) "yes, still has" means participants felt hard communicating with native English speakers and it is still a problem now.

Table 4. Correlation coefficients of personal contacts with instructors and overall satisfaction of the program

		Personal contacts	Overall satisfaction
Personal contacts	Spearman Correlation	1	.299
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.495
	N	14	14
Overall satisfaction	Spearman Correlation	-.199	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.495	
	N	14	14

Results from Pearson's correlation coefficients demonstrated that admission condition was negatively correlated with gauged courses difficulty ($r=-0.231$). That is to say, participants who reached the language proficiency requirement (IELTS 7.0 with none of sections below 6.0) would find the courses less difficult; while students had to take ELIP (English Language Improvement Program) before admission would also have problem within academic learning. Again, the statistical test did not review a statistically significant result; this could be because of small study samples (Table 6).

Table 5. One-way ANOVA Analysis of overall satisfaction by difficulty of communication

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
No difficulty	3	3.33	1.155	.667
Yes, but not now	9	3.33	.500	.167
Yes, still has difficulty	2	3.50	.707	.500
Sum	14	3.36	.633	.169

As shown in Table 7, difficulties of communication and gauged courses difficulty were positively related ($r=0.200$). That means participants who had difficulty talking to

native English speakers found M.Ed. courses tougher. However, the correlation did not show any statically significance.

In conclusion, although the inferential analysis does not show any significant statistical results, English language proficiency was negatively related to perceived courses difficulty, which meant that participants with higher language proficiency found the professional courses easier. Personal contacts with instructors appeared to be positively related with overall satisfaction of the M.Ed. program, even though the statistical test did not reveal significant relationship.

Table 6 Correlation Coefficients of admission condition and gauged courses difficulty

		Admission condition	Courses difficulty
Admission condition	Pearson Correlation	1	-.231
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.428
	N	14	14
Gauged courses difficulty	Pearson Correlation	-.231	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.428	
	N	14	14

Table 7 Correlation coefficients of difficulties of communication and gauged courses difficulty

		Communication	Courses difficulty
Difficulties of communication	Pearson Correlation	1	.200
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.492
	N	14	14
Gauged courses difficulty	Pearson Correlation	.200	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.492	
	N	14	14

CHAPTER 6

Interview Results

For the qualitative part of this study, 5 participants in international M.Ed. program were interviewed, and each interview lasted approximately one hour. This chapter outlines the results of the qualitative study. The findings of the one-on-one interviews conducted with Chinese international students were divided into five themes that emerged from data collected: background information, challenges, corresponding learning strategies, social life in the academic environment, perspectives of the program, and their satisfaction about M.Ed. program (international cohort). For the purposes of anonymity, each participant was given a letter designation, starting with ‘Participant A’, and ending with ‘Participant E’.

Background Information

Education Background

The participants in the qualitative phase included five students from the international cohort in the M.Ed. program. Four of the participants lived in an urban area while in China and were also the only child in their families, while Participant C’s family had three children and was located in a rural area in Guangdong Province. Regarding educational background, the interview participants came from different majors, but each earned bachelor degrees in the arts: Participant A graduated from Yangzhou University and majored in teaching Chinese as a second language; Participant B studied media at Chongqing University of Posts and Telecommunications; Participant C graduated from

South China Agricultural University where she studied English literacy; Participant D was from Changchun University of Science and Technology and majored in linguistic with a focus on English and Japanese; and Participant E graduated from Nanjing University of Chinese Medicine and her major was medical English.

Reasons for Choosing the City/Canada

When being asked why they choose Canada as their graduate study destination, the answers included five key factors: (1) Canada is a relatively safe and less aggressive country compared to America; (2) Canada is a diverse country with attractive immigration policies; (3) master's graduates can apply for three-year work permit within Canada; (4) participants knew some acquaintances in Canada; and (5) Canada is close to the America, and it is possible to find a job there. Participant E mentioned that the main reason she chose Canada was her aunt and uncle same city, and they had highly recommended Canada to her because of nice natural environment, friendly people, and peaceful life. Precisely, Participant B shared her own way to choose destination for overseas study:

I use exclusive method to choose among different countries. Firstly, I will not go to the Southern Hemisphere so Australia is excluded. Then I think America is too aggressive and life in there may be fast-paced, it is excluded as well. I hate rainy weather so the UK is excluded. Finally, it comes to Canada.

As to why these participants chose the university, all participants mentioned the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP), which means graduate students can apply for provincial nomination after graduation if they receive their post-secondary degrees in

Ontario. Moreover, participant E said low living expenses and tuition fees were also contributing factors. Participant A liked the mild weather in the city because it was in the southernmost part of Canada. Participant D heard that the university had a good reputation regarding its M.Ed. program. Participant C said she also applied to other universities, but that only U of W gave her final offer.

Challenges

The researcher asked the participants what their most challenging experiences were with respect to their studies, and almost all of the participants talked about language barriers in academic reading, writing, and class discussion. Participant C said:

Before I came to Canada I was quite confident about my English proficiency, but now sometimes I find I still cannot figure out a given sentence in the assignment even though I know every single word of them. When they group together it becomes difficult to understand. So I have to go through it over and over again which wastes me a lot of time. I often spend one whole night completely understanding an article.

Such inadequate language ability negatively and significantly affected their reading efficiency. They noted that with respect to writing, they were not familiar with academic writing styles and requirements in Canada, and that they had difficulties with English grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary. Participant A said she thought requirements for academic writing in Canada were much more demanding than it in China. "In China people do not care about formatting issues in academic writing. But we came here, it is totally different and demanding for international students. Canadian students learn how to

do citations from high school, while we know nothing about it. We are like pupils, which makes me really upset at first.” In terms of class discussion, some participants reported that domestic students would often be the first to answer the question. This was likely because it took time for Chinese students to understand the question, process it in Chinese, and then organize it into English. Moreover, Chinese students knew little about the Canadian education system, and consequently struggled to answer the question in Canadian context. Participant B shared her perspective:

When the instructor raises a question, the first one to answer the question must be domestic student. They can keep talking for 30 minutes without stop with fluent and fast English while we can hardly catch up with. It is hard for us to get what they are talking with the instructor, not to mention join their discussion. When I organize my answer in English, the topic has passed.

Furthermore, there were also instances where they did not understand the question. Likewise, some students were hesitant to ask for clarification for fear of embarrassing themselves. Participant C, for example, mentioned that sometimes she thought her question was so silly that she was afraid of raising it to the class. In addition, there were differences between Canadian and Chinese culture and thinking that provided challenges as well. For instance, Chinese students were not used to debate or discussion in class so they were perceived quiet, indifferent from Canadian peers’ perspective. These participants grew up in China, and were trained and educated with Chinese ideologies and pedagogies. Consequently, it was difficult for them to adjust themselves to the

Canadian education system in a short time period. Participant E, for instance, shared her experience on writing reflection papers:

In China, students are always asked to follow instructions and do tests rather than engage in critical thinking and raising questions about lessons. At the beginning, I felt so struggled when writing reflection papers about articles I read, though I eventually became accustomed to this practice.

Teamwork was another issue for some Chinese students. Participant A stated that it is easier to complete a task alone than it is to complete a task with a team as one must discuss everything with team members and that individuals must compromise their own ideas.

Learning Strategies

In this section participants were asked what strategies they used to cope with learning challenges in Canadian education context and how long they spent on studying outside of class each week.

Asking for Help

When asked how they coped with these challenges, two participants claimed that they would ask the instructor for more detailed requirement during office hours in order to clear up any confusion. The other three participants preferred to discuss their concerns with classmates, listen to others' perspectives, and agree to a consensus. Participant D stated that:

I would like to discuss concerns with my classmates because they can understand me more easily, and they probably have similar concern so we can figure it out together. I am afraid to ask my professors for fear that they will consider my question to be silly or meaningless.

Almost all the participants mentioned the Writing Support Desk in and librarians at Leddy Library. For example, Participant D said that outside of speaking to her classmates with respect to general questions, she would seek out research support at the library, noting that the research librarian for education is extremely helpful and teaches students how to search for academic articles in databases. She also added that before submitting her papers, she would make an appointment with the Writing Support Desk to go through her work, stating that they were professional and helped her “with grammar, punctuation and formatting issues”, and concluding that she really appreciated their help. Likewise, Participant C also highly recommended the Writing Support Desk to other international students because of their patience and efficiency.

Other than asking for help, participants also had to handle academic problems by themselves. Participant B said she tried to learn academic formatting by reading other scholars’ articles; during this process she also learned more academic terms and expressions. Participant C also shared her strategies with the researcher:

The only way to improve one’s understanding of an article was to read it repeatedly. Another strategy is to listen to others’ opinions during discuss, and to share one’s own views. In Canada, what we share may challenge instructors to reconsider their thinking and examine the biases of their own cultural

backgrounds. Based on the shared experiences of the participants, then, we should try to engage ourselves in class discussion.

All participants rarely asked faculty staff for help except when they needed to change concentration (there are two option streams in the M.Ed. program: educational administration and curriculum).

Among other campus services employed by the participants was the International Student Centre (ISC). Student B, for example, spoke highly of the Resume Clinic that ISC offered for graduating students, which helped them to modify their resumes. She stated that when students in her program had concerns and questions, but did not know where to find the answers, they often turned to the ISC, and though they did not always have the answer, they could direct students to those who did. The existence of the ISC provided significant assistance to international students by providing various services or workshops that helped with applying for a US visa, applying work permits, job hunting, and English and/or Spanish conversation skills.

Time Spent Studying

Participants were also asked how many hours they spent studying outside of class each week. Actually their schedule was not firm, depend on the courses difficulty of that semester. If the course requires a lot reading and critical reflection, then it would be demanding and time-consuming. Four of the participants reported that they spent around 10 hours per week on all school work (3 courses per semester) after classes, while Participant E said that it took her around 15 hours since she had to go through articles a few times in order to write reflection about them. Additionally, Participant B stated that

at first, she “had to spend more time looking unfamiliar words up in the dictionary, but after one semester, [she] could read quickly”, which reduced the amount of time she was required to invest in reading.

Social Life

This section investigates how Chinese international students fit in socially with campus communities, including making native friends, going to church, and participating in volunteer work.

Making Native Friends

Participants all reported that they had a limited number of English-speaking friends. Most of those who had English-speaking friends got to know them through the common classes they shared. Participant A, alternately, said she met some new friends from the gym, where they played badminton together. However, after graduation, they did not have any connection. Almost all participants thought they did not fit in with Canadian culture. Participant E shared her experience: “I do not think I fit in Canadian culture; maybe [I] just have some deep understandings. In most cases, I know about the culture from observation, observing how they talk, how they deal with things.” Moreover, they learn about the culture by listening to some Chinese immigrants who have been in Canada for several years. Participant D shared her struggle:

Though I am really willing to make some local friends, my social circle is so limited. For example, my landlord is Chinese, and my housemates are all Chinese, so are most of my classmates. I have tried to attend some campus activities and

workshops, but it is hard to maintain the relationship after these events. So I do not have the access to make native friends. The access is vital; access is the key issue!

Participant B offered her insights about acculturation: “I fit in the culture through entertainment, since we have a lot of time after class. I will travel around the country learning more about Canada. I meet different people and broaden my horizon when I hang out.”

Going to Church

All the participants had been invited to Chinese or English-speaking Gospel meetings. A Chinese church located near the campus offered a ride to students to do shopping and go to picnics and some specific festivals. Participant E shared her experience regarding her religious beliefs:

I went to church once in a while when I first came here. To be honest, I was not so willing to, but they would invite me often. Last December, I listened to a speech given by a biology professor talking about Creationism. I felt so inspired and moved that I was baptized after that meeting. Now we have a meeting every Sunday.

However, the rest of the participants were not interested in Christianity. They used to attend Gospel meeting for a few times and then quit. Participant C stated that she is “not a talkative person, so it [was] hard for [her] to join” the congregation, and “it seemed like there is a gulf between Christians and non-Christians.” Participant B had a similar

opinion. She did not like “public church meetings”, and though she was respectful, she was not interested in Christianity.

Volunteer Work

Participant D frequently took part in volunteer work when she first arrived in Canada, but she stopped during the third semester because of her academic work load had become excessive. Participant A also volunteered, teaching Chinese children basic Mandarin terms in a Chinese church. Though participants had volunteer work experience, they did not build personal relationship through these events.

Perspectives

This section details participants’ insights regarding the international cohort of M.Ed. program, which they compared to the educational system in China and their previous education experience in China.

Courses

Curriculum. Two of the participants talked about the unreasonable sequence of the courses. For example, they thought methodology courses like “research in education” and “statistic in education” should be introduced at the very beginning of the program before theoretical courses. This way they could provide a “panorama” and “an overall concept” about the program. Participant A stated that she wished the curriculum setting had been more practical, like undergraduate programs. Additionally, Participant B said that there were too many theories and that the classes only covered the surface of many theories and

did not develop a profound understanding. In contrast, Participant C felt she benefited from having classes with people from different cultural backgrounds:

Because it offers me different perspectives of ideas and concepts I have already been familiar with. However, later classes only had Chinese students. I strongly suggest that courses in the international cohort should be open to all master postgraduate students in Faculty of Education. I am also confused about methodology course: students registered in the curriculum stream could only choose qualitative method, while students in the administration stream could only choose quantitative research method. This is weird, why cannot we choose both?

Participant B spoke highly of the internships, which was counted as the last course of the program. She expounded that the internship provided her with a decent opportunity to learn more about the Canadian education system and how pedagogies actually worked in schools. Alternately, Participant E complained that she expected to choose the course she was interested in, but courses in the international cohort were pre-assigned. Students were not able to choose what they liked and disliked. Additionally, Participant E thought the schedule of the program was too tight as there were only 3 weeks break between two semesters; and the whole program finished in 16 months, noting that by the time students got used to the program, it had come to an end. “It is like we came here in a rush and finished all the courses without reflective thinking and suddenly it was end”, E said.

Class instruction. Participants appreciated Canadian teaching styles, which were new and interesting to them. Participant D notes that the Canadian style of instruction meant encouraging students to share their ideas with the class whether they were right or

wrong. Instructors would approve students' opinion first, and then analyzed them with them approaching the right answer. In this way students were more willing to engage in class discussion. Participant D noted that in contrast, "Teachers in China always lead the class, and there are only right answers or wrong answers. Ones who get the right will be awarded and prized, others will be criticized." Participant E added her understanding on the Canadian teaching style, noting that students were required to read assigned articles before classes, and then some students gave a presentation about the reading material. After the presentation, students discussed and/or debated the ideas presented in the article. The difference was that students rather than teachers were the host of the teaching and learning process; and teachers played their roles as facilitators. Participant E found that she benefited from this process a lot. In addition, professors were always patient with questions and were helpful. However, Participant A thought class instruction offered only surface explanations and did not lead to a deep understanding of the material. Participant C shared her experience on qualitative method class:

when the instructor asked us to raise at least three questions after reading an article. At first I had difficulty figuring out questions, because it is harder to raise a question than just answer a specific question. You need to build a profound idea about the whole ideas. But later I found that it helped me to gain a better understanding of the article. Moreover, this pedagogy cultivates critical thinking ability.

Academic environment. All of the participants enjoyed the academic environment on campus for several reasons. Firstly, campus location was quiet and peaceful, which

made it an ideal place to study. Secondly, instructors were willing to provide accessible academic sources to facilitate learning. Moreover, instructors would offer opportunities for students to work in groups and do research. Participant C provided an explanation of the quality of the way Canadian students' embraced synthesis:

Because they grow up in a free environment with no one pushing them to study hard, university students all learn through their own motivation. Thus they have more self-control, and possessed quality like a strong work ethic and intelligence. However, Chinese students are forced to study hard from elementary school through high school by parents and teachers since outstanding grades are considered as the only way to success. So it is common that many first-year university students are addicted to computer games and finally drop out from universities due to lack of surveillance.

Regarding studying environment, Participant D complained that they did not have access to graduate lounge (a study room in Education Building) as domestic graduate students did.

Social environment. All of the participants were more or less indifferent about social involvement. Two participants reported that they were introverted, so they rarely participated in community events. As a result, they did not really engage in the social environment and had nothing to say about it. Participant D had sought an executive nomination at the International Student Centre (ISC), but she lost to another student. After this experience, she did not join any other on-campus institutions.

Differences between Canadian and Chinese Classes

Participants were asked to compare Canadian and Chinese classes based on their learning experience in both countries. All the participants had the consensus that Canadian classes were freer. Students could have more autonomy choosing their courses, customizing their own schedule, and switching between part-time and full time. Students were also encouraged to express personal ideas in classes. Two of the participants talked about the size of classes. In China there were around 50 students in a class, while in Canada the number was around 15. Smaller sizes of classes were more student-centered, and every student had chance to express themselves. Alternately, in China, teachers might not be able to take care of each student. However, in order to spread equal attention, teaching efficiency was sometimes compromised. Participant A felt that Canadian teachers spent too much time discussing and debating one opinion. Students just kept talking and teachers would not stop their conversations. She also thought Canadian universities were more serious in academia and focused on teamwork. Academic integrity was also a central issue in Canada, as Participant A noted:

Since the first day of our program, librarians and professors were talking about academic integrity all the time. We have to be very careful when we write papers doing citation of anything you retrieved from other sources to avoid plagiarism.

Participants C talked about friendly, humorous professors who were always willing to help, “they talk like your friends rather than authorities of knowledge, and they are humorous and funny. We can talk some course- related jokes in class which is prohibited in China.” Additionally, instructors set multiples tests during semesters, like quizzes,

midterms, and finals, in order to keep students in track; while in China students were only busy with finals (a few majors with midterms).

Differences between Canadian and Chinese Learning Environments

On a macroscale, participants made comparison between Canadian (CA) and Chinese (CH) learning environment. Their perspectives regarding this topic were categorized into three subtitles: educational value, objective of education, and pedagogy.

Education value. Participant E shared her experience in Canada. She deeply felt that every student was regarded as a unique individual. For example, students with disability could arrange special exams based on their needs. All kinds of students were respected and taken care of. Teachers played their roles in helping learners to explore their talents. However, due to much larger size of classes, this seemed to be unrealistic in China.

Objective of education. Participant A claimed that CH education focused on conveying concept of knowledge, while CA education focused on synthesis quality and practical application. Similarly, Participant E thought CA education sought to develop learning ability and skills, while CH education was exam-oriented. She noted the value of the Canadian approach, stating that “Since knowledge is endless, once you know how to enrich yourself by learning, you will benefit from it in lifetime”.

Pedagogy. Participants shared their experience and opinions of different pedagogical approaches. Participant B stated that students in Canada were encouraged to speak in class and share “whatever came to their mind”. She said:

In China students are afraid of answering unsure questions, because if they feel shameful if the answer is wrong. But in Canada this problem does not exist since instructors encourage everyone to express their ideas. No matter what you say, they would praise you which makes you feel motivated to engage more in class. I think this is one characteristic of Western teaching that I really appreciate.

Students also needed a lot of preparation before class, which included reading or working on presentation, as they were expected to share ideas with their peers in class. Alternately, CH classes focused on teachers' output, with students listening and taking notes. Participant C said she appreciated that instructors in Canada put a lot of effort into motivating and engaging students in class and due to small size of classes, instructors would be able to handle different ways of teaching approaches, such as role playing, debates, or roundtable discussions. Participant E stated that CA education placed a different emphasis on teamwork and cooperation with respect to task accomplishment, while CH education cultivated individual problem-solving abilities.

Satisfaction

Benefits to Studying in Canada

When speaking of the things they found to be most enjoyable in Canada, all of the participants felt their life was freer than it was in China. For example, Participant A said that in Canada, she had absolute control of her life and could make plans as she desired with no disruption from her parents or public opinions. Participant C liked the city because people were friendly and always ready to help others. She also thought that life was less competitive and stressful in Canada compared to her hometown in China.

Likewise, Participant E mentioned that she enjoyed the “peaceful, simple, and harmonious” life in Canada and that people in China were always in rush. Since the city was the fourth most diverse city in Canada, Participant D would like to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds and she was willing to know more about Canadian cultural diversity. In contrast, Participant B observed that she primarily enjoyed reading and writing papers: “Sometimes it was sufferable, but it had been the happiest and most fulfilling days of my life”.

Demerits to Studying in Canada

Though participants enjoyed studying in Canada, they also had a variety of concerns as well. Participant A complained that she did not learn Western educational theories systematically; she was just given summary information about different schools of theory. Participant C felt like there was prejudice and discrimination in Canada, in part due to language barriers. She observed that Canadians were given priority with respect to jobs, making it difficult for international students to find work. Participant D was concerned about the stress related to schoolwork. She found she could not handle the excessive amount of reading. Additionally, she wished there were mixed-class with both international and domestic students so that students could learn from each other. In contrast, Participant E found that life was too comfortable to motivate herself to hunt for a job since she could feed herself by working as a waitress three days a week. She also mentioned that there were a limited number of jobs in the city she was living in.

Changes Resulting from Studying in Canada

Mindset. Each of the participants found that their mindset had changed as a result of their experience, though each had different changes. For instance, Participant A offered her thoughts on the way she now thought: “Do not limit yourself, which is what I usually tell myself. When you know more about the world and meet more people, you will know there is really no limitation for humans.” Similarly, Participant B believed in what her professor told her: “never assume anything.” Participant C said Canadian people like praising others all the time, from strangers on the street, to instructors in the university. She stated that though she “may not take the praise seriously”, it improved her day whenever she heard such compliments and that she became “grateful to everything surrounding” her. With regard to religious beliefs, Participant E adopted a new faith and was baptized during December of 2015. Now she felt more positive with respect to the future.

English proficiency. The English proficiency of participants had improved to varying degrees during their sojourn in Canada. Participant A reported that her oral English had improved, but that other language abilities did not seem enhanced. Other participants also claimed similar feeling. In contrast, Participant B noted that her reading speed had increased dramatically.

Independence. Both Participant B and D thought they had become more independent during their time in Canada. Participant B could adapt herself to various situations now due to stronger survival skills. Likewise, Participant D felt that she became more independent:

I was terrible with directions. During the first a few days in Canada, I did not even know where the grocery store was, and I did not have a kettle or bottle. Those days were embarrassing and suffering, but I eventually made it through them. Now I can handle everything by myself and will not be afraid of any unknown places. That is what a so-called 'grown-up' is.

Life styles. There were also life styles changes, particularly with respect to personal health. Participant E, for example, cultivated the beneficial habit of engaging in sports every week during her M.Ed. program.

Plans for Future

All of the interview participants showed their willingness to find jobs in Canada after graduation. Regarding the jobs those they preferred, each of them said they wanted to make a living in order to be financially independent. Participant D struggled with the fact that her parents wanted her to go back to China to accompany them because she was the only child of the family and they missed her very much. This was exacerbated by the fact that her parents did not speak English at all, and so it was unrealistic for them to live in Canada. As a result, Participant D faced a dilemma. Currently she planned to work in Canada for two or three years, and then go back home to take care of her parents.

Suggestion for the Program

At the end of interviews, participants were asked to provide some suggestion for the international M.Ed. program.

All the participants mentioned that they wished more autonomy on registering courses. They complained that all the courses in two streams were pre-assigned for international cohort while domestic graduate students could choose courses as their interest and wish. And because some courses were only designed for international cohort, there were purely Chinese students in class. Participant C suggested that the faculty should facilitate “multi-cultural” interaction in curriculum setting encouraging more teamwork and communication among domestic students and international peers, which was essential especially in a diverse context of Canada. Besides, international cohort did not have access to graduate lounge (a study room for graduate students) as domestic students did. “I feel alienating and segregation because that is unfair. Hopefully the faculty can provide equal opportunities and facilities for all students.” Additionally, Participant C gave advice on adjustment of sequences of courses based on course content and teaching practical skills in existing curriculum. B also suggested that instructor should try to link the theories with up-to-date event in educational profession in order to promote better understanding rather than just focusing on debate of contrasting theories. Finally, since international students might face more academic challenges than domestic peers, A wished that professors could pay more attention on them offering suggestion to help them release learning stress.

CHAPTER 7

Discussion, Implication and Conclusion

By examining learning experience of Chinese international students in the M.Ed. program, this study aimed to explore the challenges Chinese international students faced and corresponding strategies they used to cope with these problems, and to determine how the program could improve in order to serve them better. The quantitative exploration into the participants' learning experiences demonstrated that English barriers had negative effects on their academic achievement. Qualitative findings from the interviews explained further reasons and insights of these Chinese international students. Qualitative results supported most results from the statistical analysis, but inconsistencies also existed in some respects. This chapter firstly provides findings and discussion about the research questions:

1. What are Chinese international students' experience and perceptions about the international M.Ed. program?
2. What challenges do Chinese international students experience for their learning in this program?
3. What are the corresponding strategies that Chinese international students use to cope with such challenges?

Once these questions have been explored, a critical reflection of the research, scope and limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research are discussed. Finally, conclusions are drawn from this study.

Findings and Discussion

Challenges

Around 64% of the surveyed students reported that they used to have difficulty having conversation with native English speakers. More than 71% of participants thought courses in M.Ed. program at an “all right” level of difficulty; another 21% participants gauged them “easy”; only 8% of participants found the courses tough. Among various factors contributing to difficulty of courses, “insufficient communication with instructors” and “too much required reading” were mostly selected by survey participants. This result was consistent with answers from interviews. Interview participants reported language barriers in reading, writing and in-class discussion. Although quantitative data did not showed statically significance between English language proficiency and perceived difficulty of courses, interviews showed that language barriers played an important role in participants’ learning experience. Even though they all passed language tests before enrolled into the program, using English for academic purpose at tertiary level was still tough for them. Insufficient language proficiency made them less confident and even reluctant to class participation. Language barriers seem to be a universal problem for non- English-speaking students. Johnson’s (2008) research in New Zealand also indicated that international learners in first year only understood 20 to 30 percent of lecture content while the senior students still did not understand all of the lecturing (around 70 to 90 percent). Interviewees reported that compared to the professional terms, understanding language at the “extended discourse level” was more difficult. Zhang and Zhou’s (2010) studies on first-year Chinese

international students also reinforced this finding that even though they felt comfortable speaking English, problems regarding using English for academic purposes still existed.

Furthermore, cultural differences which came with different pedagogies, curriculum settings or evaluation systems were problematic for Chinese international students to perform as well as their native peers in tertiary study. Since participants' prior education were all received in China, adjustment in a dramatically different academic environment was not surprisingly difficult. Tweed and Lehman (2002) argues that Chinese learners value diligent learning, respectful to authority and behavioral principals while Western education are more individualized, creative and innovative.

Learning Strategies

When questioned whom would they ask for help resolving academic problems, 71% of participants chose to ask their peers while 21% would turn to instructors. 64% of participants admitted that they rarely had personal contact with instructors; and 36% of participants claimed somehow personal contact with instructors. In the later interviews participants clarified the reason that their peers could understand their concern or questions easily. Meanwhile, professors always seemed to be busy and "not approachable". Furthermore, Johnson (2008) found that international students preferred to seek clarification about course or assignment content via email or the message system, rather than by face-to-face communication with instructors. Besides, participants spoke highly of writing support and research help service in Leddy Library. Some participants turn to them for help regarding search relevant literatures, organizing outlines of papers, grammar and formatting issues. It is no wonder that students love writing support service

because it is free offering professional help; and most importantly, it is accessible and convenient compared to asking instructors. Other than asking others for help, participants also tried to figure out academic challenges by their own through repeating reading an article until they understood it. This finding was consistent with studies conducted by Lihong and Michael (2011) in the UK. They indicated that most Chinese students viewed learning as a process of constant revision and repeating. Moreover, in order to get better understanding of assigned articles, one participant said she would try to engage herself in class discussion so that she could get her peers' understanding which deepened her own cognition of knowledge.

Besides academic help, participants also benefited campus service from ISC (International Student Centre). They were appreciated for their resume clinic, US visa guidance, job hunting workshops, etc. The staffs were always ready to help international students facilitating their academic and social adjustment.

When asked time spent on study, most surveyed participants (64%) spent 5 to 10 hours (in average) on study every week depending on the workload. However, this is much lower than instructors' expectation, which is three times of the lecturing time. That is to say, students are supposed to spend 15 hours on their courses outside classroom. Insufficient effort might a reason for their perceived learning difficulties. 57% of them preferred to study alone in a private setting while 35% of surveyed participants would like to study with friends on campus. Not surprisingly, participants reported that writing assignments took them long time at the beginning, but after one semester they could handle them more efficiently.

Social Life

In this section participants were asked how they socially fitted in Canadian academic environment. Generally, participants were not very engaged in Canadian culture. Only 36% of them had more than two local friends while 14% of surveyed participants did not make friends locally at all. In terms of ways of building network, about 43% of participants met their friends from common classes and the same percentage of them knew their friends from off-campus events. The results were consistent with interviews. Participants learned about Canadian culture from limited sources, for example, observation, listening to other Chinese immigrants or religious events. At the beginning they were quite active participating in voluntary work on campus, but then they quit because of heavy schoolwork. In most cases they just hung out with people from similar cultural background or same country. Rienties et al. (2013) confirmed this finding that even though international students had no problem working with domestic students, but they would cooperate better with peers from similar cultures or with similar experiences, especially when it came to more demanding projects. Participants share their struggle that they really wanted to meet more local friends, but they did not have access to it. After some failed trials they ended up staying in the small community of Chinese students. All participants had been invited to Bible study or Gospel meeting, but due to different religious beliefs only one of them was convinced and baptized. According to Berry's acculturation framework (2008), process of acculturation needs effort from both dominant group and non- dominant group. Thus, acculturation is a mutual process which requires more acceptance and opportunities from the host culture (defined as

'multiculturalism' strategy) and active integration from individuals in non-dominant group (defined as 'integration' strategy) (Berry, 2008).

Perspectives

In this section participants shared their insights regarding courses (curriculum and class instruction), and they also compared the differences between Canadian and Chinese education not only on classes but also learning environments since they had learning experiences on both sides.

Courses. Participants complained about the unreasonable subsequence of courses in M.Ed. program. They thought introductory courses and methodology-related courses should be put at the beginning of the program in order to provide a general understanding of the subject. Regarding the content of courses, participant reported that theories taught in the course were too surface to build a deep depression. Regarding the preference of mixed-classes or Chinese classes, all the surveyed participants chose mixed-classes with domestic peers. However, interviewed participants claimed that actually some courses of international cohort were segregated from domestic cohort. That being said, domestic students could not register some of the courses of international cohort, so there were courses with merely Chinese students. This phenomenon would negatively influence international learners' academic performance and social adjustment. William and Johnson (2011) values importance of establishing cross-cultural friendship between international students and their domestic peers. They indicate that in this relationship international learners can release acculturative stress while domestic students also can develop diversity awareness and multicultural skills. Additionally, participants

appreciated the arrangement of internship which broadened their horizon how educational theories practiced in schools to promote learning and teaching.

Class instruction. Generally, participants appreciated Canadian teaching styles not only because they encouraged critical thinking but they promoted students' class engagement. In their perspectives, Canadian teaching styles also meant that class progress was led by learners; they had to think independently and share their own ideas in classes. As facilitators of classes, professors were always willing to offer assistance or guidance. Nevertheless, some interviewees argued that student-centered classes may decrease teaching efficiency. For example, sometimes students kept arguing on a specific topic and teachers would not stop their conversations. Similarly, Huang (2005) also argued that teachers in North America relied far less on text books expecting students to complete extensive reading, were not afraid of being "sidetracked" into an irrelevant topic during a lecture, did not write detailed information on the blackboard, and rarely summarize their lectures. These teaching strategies were viewed by Chinese students as poor organization and negatively impact on lecture comprehension. Since they had already got used to Chinese cramming teaching, it took time for them to adapt these methods.

Differences between Canadian and Chinese Education

All of the participants had the consensus that Canadian classes were freer than those in China. Students could have more autonomy choosing their courses, customizing their own schedules, and switching between part-time and full time mode. Furthermore, due to smaller size of classes, Canadian instructors were able to take care of every student providing chances for them to express themselves in class. In these cases, sometimes

class efficiency was compromised as indicated above. Regarding academic atmosphere, Canada emphasized on academic integrity which was less attended in China.

As students in Education, participants also compared learning environments in Canada and China on a macroscale. Participants felt that students were regarded as unique individuals since special needs or various opportunities were provided; while this seemed to be unrealistic in China because of huge population. In terms of objectives of education, participants thought Canada focused on synthesis quality and practical skills while China was exam-oriented. As students in Canada, they needed to do a lot preparation before classes, in order to share insights of articles or give a presentation; while in Chinese classes, mostly there were teachers talking with students listening and making notes. Moreover, in Canada education placed a different emphasized on teamwork and cooperation with respect to task accomplishment, while Chinese education cultivated individual problem-solving abilities.

Satisfaction

Seven aspects of the program were categorized to see the satisfaction level separately. As to satisfaction about various factors of the program, academic environment and social environment are the most satisfying, with 71% and 64% respectively. However, interviewees argued that students of international cohort did not have access to graduate lounge (a public study room) as domestic students did which was alienating. This phenomenon was explained as “segregation” by Berry (2008) which meant dominant culture rejected or somehow set barriers in acculturation process while individuals in non-dominant group were trying to adjust themselves. Thus acculturation would be

interrupted by dominant culture. And based on interviews, Chinese international students were somehow indifferent about social events on campus. Then curriculum and faculty support was the least satisfying issues, with both 29%. Regarding the overall satisfaction of the program, half of the participants chose “somewhat satisfied” while 43% of them were satisfied about it. Furthermore, around 80% of participants stated that they did not know whether they should recommend this M.Ed. program to others while only 7% of participants said yes to this question. Half of the participants reported that the program was their first choice of international education.

Generally, participants enjoyed their lives in Canada because they were much freer than those in China without public opinions and pushing from parents. They also appreciated diverse population and “peaceful, simple and harmony life” in Canada. However, as international students in a sojourn country, participants struggled with prejudice and discrimination in Canada, in part due to language barriers and unfamiliar cultural background. Noh, S., et al (1999) indicates that prejudice and discrimination are universally perceived in diverse counties such as the US, Canada or Australia. While many Asians believe that “doing nothing” is the best way to respond to discrimination, they suggest confrontation is more adaptive than is forbearance.

Implications

Findings of this research indicated that English language proficiency had a great impact on academic achievement, social adjustment, sense of belonging. To better help Chinese international students to achieve academic fulfillment during their sojourn

journey, not only the government, but also different departments in tertiary study should take actions.

For Chinese international students, learning diversity not only facilitates their own culture, but also fosters their global awareness of the world, which is considered a prerequisite for potential employees nowadays. Moreover, improving synthesis quality to promote adjustment in the new culture is crucial. First of all, as ESL (English as a second language) students, they should seize every opportunity to learn and talk in English in order to minimize language barriers in academic learning and building social network. At the meantime, international sojourners need to get out of their comfort zone, trying to participate in academic environment and meet local friends as much as possible.

Teachers and educators have a hidden impact to society as a whole. When students get into the labor market and workforce, their behavior and learning styles will influence society. School and educators should attach more attention to the nature of international students, helping these students to complement their academic goals. They should be trained to be sensitive and supportive to intercultural context. Specific department, such as ISC in current study, should provide more opportunities and service to help newcomers adjust themselves in the brand new culture. And various departments need to think about how to promote learning and teaching in a diverse school climate in different subject contexts. This action will benefit not only international students but also domestic peers.

Government and policy makers need to strengthen the existing structure and establish new policies to help international sojourners and their families accommodate to the new

culture, especially successfully complete their degrees in Canada. Government should see the fact that international students are making great contributions to Canadian economy with potential to devote themselves in Canadian labor market. The government should try its best to help these students release barriers in academic and social adjustment, in order to build a better future for Canada.

Critical Reflections of the Researcher

As a researcher, this project has allowed me to probe the learning experience of the Chinese international students and allowed me to build a profound understanding of the challenges they encountered and strategies they use to facilitate their academic performance. By performing the one-on-one interviews, I was able to communicate with these Chinese students listening to their stories. The participants trusted me and shared with me their experiences and feelings. This study has helped me in building confidence and desire to further my study and conduct more research about international students.

As an educator, this study has provided me a new perspective to look at international education. I have come to understand how much effort does each international student make in order to academic and socially adjustment. As an educator, I should see the students with a cultural or ethnic background other than just a learner. I will also share what I have found with Chinese international students and the faculty to investigate the solutions.

As an international student, I could understand participants' struggle and challenges that they had experience in Canadian tertiary study. To some extent, I vaguely see myself in them. I reminded myself to solve these problems actively. I have learned that even

though life was tough, we should try to improve our language proficiency and engage in Canadian academy.

Conclusion

Question 1. What are Chinese international students' experience and perceptions about the international M.Ed. program?

They experienced Western teaching and learning styles, with appreciation and struggles. On one side, they appreciated the encouraging atmosphere, freer environment and learning to be a critical thinker; on the other side, they had difficulties in tertiary study, adjusting themselves in to the culture and academic performance.

Question 2. What challenges do Chinese international students experience for their learning in this program?

First of all, language barriers are the most problematic issue that Chinese students faced in academic and social adjustment. Secondly, lack of class participation also influenced their academic integration. As individuals of culturally non-dominant group, socially segregation was perceived challenging for Chinese learners. Additionally, how to achieve acculturation in Canadian culture was universal concern faced by all international students.

Question 3. What are the corresponding strategies that Chinese international students use to cope with such challenges?

Corresponding to language barriers, the priority was to improve their language proficiency during their learning experience. And then they tried to actively get involved in on-campus events and volunteer work. About academic concerns, they would ask campus staff or co-national fellows for help. In order to socially adjust themselves, they made effort learning more about Canadian culture and customs as much as they could.

REFERENCES

- Agar, M. (1988). Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 176(3), 192.
- Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. (2010). *Advocacy and research: International students*. Retrieved from http://www.aucc.ca/policy/priorities/internationalstudents_e.html
- Berry, J. W. (1980). Acculturation as varieties of adaptation. In A. Padilla (Ed.), *Acculturation: Theory, models and some new findings* (pp. 9–25). Boulder: Westview Press.
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 46, 5-68.
- Berry, J. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 2, 697-712.
- Berry, J. W. (2008). Globalisation and acculturation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 32(4), 328-336.
- Bodycott, P. (2012). Embedded culture and intercultural adaptation: implications for managing the needs of Chinese Students. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 34(4), 355-364.
- Burch, T. (2008). Teaching and learning accounting with overseas students. *People and Place*, 16(1), 12-20

- Carkin, S. (2005). English for academic purposes. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (pp. 85–98). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Canada (2012), *International Education: A Key Driver of Canada's Future Prosperity*, Advisory Panel on Canada's International Education Strategy Final Report, Canada.
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2011). *Canada – total entries of foreign students by source country*. Retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2010/temporary/13.asp>
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions* (2nd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (3rd edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Creswell, J. W., & Zhang, W. (2009). The application of mixed methods designs to trauma research. *Journal of traumatic stress*, 22(6), 612-621.
- Dahlin, B., & Watkins, D. (2000). The role of repetition in the processes of memorizing and understanding: A comparison of the views of German and Chinese secondary school students in Hong Kong. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 70(1), 65-84.
- Dao, T., Lee, D., & Chang, H. (2007). Acculturation level, perceived English fluency, perceived social support level, and depression among Taiwanese international students. *College Student Journal*, 41, 287-295.

- Demaray, M. K., & Malecki, C. K. (2011). The Role of Social Support in the Lives of Students Involved in Bullying. *Bullying in North American Schools*, 182-190.
- Durkin, K. (2008b). The adaptation of East Asian masters students to western norms of critical thinking and argumentation in the UK. *Intercultural Education*, 19(1), 15–27.
- Dyson, L. L. (2001). Home-school communication and expectations of recent Chinese immigrants. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 26, 455-476.
- Johnson, E. M. (2008). An investigation into pedagogical challenges facing international tertiary-level students in New Zealand. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 27(3), 231-243.
- Fairclough, N. (2000). Multiliteracies and language: Orders of discourse and intertextuality. In B. Cope, & M. Kalantzis (Eds), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures* (pp. 159–178). London; New York: Routledge.
- Feng, J. H. (1991). *The adaptation of Students from the People's Republic of China to an American Academic Culture*. Reports (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 329833).
- Gay, G. (1995). Curriculum theory and multicultural education. In J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (pp. 25–43).
- Gordon, M. (1964). *Assimilation in American life*. New York: Oxford.

- Green, A. (2005). EAP study recommendations and score gains on the IELTS academic writing test. *Assessing Writing*, 10(1), 44–60.
- Guo, S., & Jamal, Z. (2007). Nurturing cultural diversity in higher education: A critical review of selected models. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 37(3), 27-49.
- Halx, M. D. (2010). Re-conceptualizing college and university teaching through the lens of adult education: Regarding undergraduates as adults. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 15, 519-530.
- Harris, D. (2012). Chinese students in America. It's bad out there. *China Law Blog*. Retrieved from http://www.chinalawblog.com/2012/01/chinese_students_in_america_why_do_they_even_botherhtml
- Hegarty, N. (2014). Where we are now –The presence and importance of international student to universities in the United States. *Journal of International Students*, 4(3), 223-235.
- Huang, J., & Klinger, D. A. (2006). Chinese Graduate Students at North American Universities: Learning Challenges and Coping Strategies. *Canadian and International Education / Education canadienne et internationale*. 35 (2), Article 5.
- Huang, J. (2005). Challenges of Academic Listening in English: Reports by Chinese Students. *College Student Journal*, 39(3), 553-569.

- Hui, C. H., & Triandis, H. C. (1986). Individualism-collectivism a study of cross-cultural researchers. *Journal of cross-cultural psychology, 17*(2), 225-248.
- Ie, F. (2009, May). *Identity and Socialization of International Students in America*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Sheraton New York, New York City, NY. Retrieved from http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p14718_index.html
- Johnson, E.M. (2008). The role of computer-supported discussion for language teacher education: What do the students say? *CALICO Journal, 20*(1), 59–79.
- Jones, J. (1999). From silence to talk: Cross-cultural ideas on students' participation in academic group discussion. *English for Specific Purposes, 18*(3), 243–259.
- Kerka, S. (1995). *Adult learner retention revisited*. Eric Digests, (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 389880). Adult Career and Vocational Education: Columbus, OH.
- Kim, B. S. K., Li, L. C., & Ng, G. F. (2005). The Asian American Values Scale—Multidimensional: Development, reliability, and validity. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 11*, 187–201.
- Klein, M. H., Miller, M. H., & Alexander, A. A. (1981). The American experience of the Chinese student: On being normal in an abnormal world. *Normal and abnormal behavior in Chinese culture* (pp. 311-330). Springer Netherlands.

- Lee, J. S., Koeske, G. F., & Sales, E. (2004). Social support buffering of acculturative stress: A study of mental health symptoms among Korean international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 28(5), 399-414.
- Li, J. (2003). US and Chinese cultural beliefs about learning. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95(2), 258.
- Lihong, W & Michael, B. (2011). 'But when you are doing your exams it is the same as in China' - Chinese students adjusting to western approaches to teaching and learning. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 41(4), 407-424.
- Lin, E. (2008). Family and social influences on identity conflict in overseas Chinese. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 32, 130–141.
- Lin, M. (2012). Students of different minds; Bridging the gaps of international students studying in the U.S. *US-China Education Review*, 2(3), 333-344.
- Lin, L. (2002). *The learning experiences of Chinese graduate students in American social sciences programs*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Comparative and International Education Society. Orlando, FL. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 474163)
- Ling Eleanor Zhang & Vesa Peltokorpi (2015): Multifaceted effects of host country language proficiency in expatriate cross-cultural adjustments: a qualitative study in China, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, DOI: 10.1080/09585192.2015.1072104

- Lincoln, Yvonna S. & Egon G. Guba (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. California: Sage Publication Inc.
- Liu, X., & Magjuka, R. J. (2012). Learning in cross-cultural online MBA courses: Perceptions of Chinese students. *Cases on Cultural Implications and Considerations in Online Learning*, 315.
- Liu, D. L. (1994). *Deep sociocultural transfer and its effect on second language speakers' communication*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Maltimore, MD.
- Marton, F., Dall'Alba, G., & Tse, L. K. (1996). Memorizing and understanding: The keys to the paradox. *The Chinese learner: Cultural, psychological and contextual influences*, 69-83.
- McCallum, A. (2004). *Best practice teaching strategies for international students*. Wellington: New Zealand Ministry of Education. Retrieved from <http://www.educationnz.org.nz/eedf/reports/A1.8.pdf>
- McKenzie, K., & Schweitzer, R. (2001). Who succeeds at university? Factors predicting academic performance in first year Australian university students. *Higher education research and development*, 20(1), 21-33.
- Noh, S., Beiser, M., Kaspar, V., Hou, F., & Rummens, J. (1999). Perceived racial discrimination, depression, and coping: A study of Southeast Asian refugees in Canada. *Journal of health and social behavior*, 193-207.

- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2004). *Internationalisation and trade in higher education: opportunities and challenges*. Organisation for economic co-operation and development.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2007). *Cross-border tertiary education: A way towards capacity development*. OECD Publishing and Centre for Educational Research and Innovation.
- Vincent-Lancrin, S. (2007). Developing capacity through cross-border tertiary education. *Cross-border Tertiary Education*, 47-108.
- Otten, M. (2003). Intercultural learning and diversity in higher education. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 7(1), 12-26
- Padilla, A.M., & Perez, W. (2003). Acculturation, social identity, and social cognition: A new perspective. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 25, 35–55.
- Rienties, B., Beausaert, S., Grohnert, T., Niemantsverdriet, S., & Kommers, P. (2012). Understanding academic performance of international students: The role of ethnicity, academic and social integration. *Higher education*, 63(6), 685-700.
- Rienties, B., Nanclares, N. H., Jindal-Snape, D., & Alcott, P. (2012). The role of cultural background and team divisions in developing social learning relations in the classroom. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 17(4), 332-353.
- Rosenthal, D. A., & Feldman, S. S. (1992). The Nature and Stability of Ethnic Identity in Chinese Youth Effects of Length of Residence in Two Cultural Contexts. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 23(2), 214-227.

- Roy, S. R. (2013). Educating Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students: Recommendations to American professors. *Journal of International Students*, 3(1),10-16.
- Samovar, L. A., & Porter, R. E. (1991). *Intercultural communication: A reader* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Statistics Canada. (2008). Canada's ethnocultural mosaic, 2006 Census. Retrieved from http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2010/statcan/CS97-562-2006-1-eng.pdf
- Redfield, R., Linton, R., & Herskovits, M. J. (1936). Memorandum for the study of acculturation. *American Anthropologist*, 38, 149–152.
- Ryder, A. G., Alden, L. E., Paulhus, D. L., & Dere, J. (2013). Does acculturation predict interpersonal adjustment? It depends on who you talk to. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 37(4), 502-506.
- Searle, W., & Ward, C. (1990). The prediction of psychological and sociocultural adjustment during cross-cultural transitions. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 14(4), 449-464.
- Smith, R., & Khawaja, N. (2011). A review of the acculturation experiences of international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35, 699-713. doi: 10.1016/j.ijintrel.2011.08.004
- Statistics Canada (2006). *2006 Community Profiles*. Retrieved from <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/index.cfm?Lang=E>.

- Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of educational research*, 89-125.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Trice, A.G. (2007). Faculty perspectives regarding graduate international students' isolation from host national students. *International Education Journal*, 8, 108–117.
- Tsang, E. W. (2001). Adjustment of mainland Chinese academics and students to Singapore. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 25(4), 347-372.
- Tweed R. G., & Lehman, D. R. (2002). Learning considered within a cultural context. *American Psychologist*, 57(2), 89-99.
- Upton, T. A. (1989). Chinese students, American universities, and cultural confrontation. *Minne TESOL Journal*, 7, 9-28.
- Wan, G. F. (2001). The learning experience of Chinese students in American universities: A cross-cultural perspective. *College Student Journal*, 35, 28-44.
- Wang, V. C. X., & Kreysa, P. (2006). Instructional strategies of distance education instructors in China. *Journal of Educators Online*, 3(1), 1-25.
- Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (2001). Coping with cross-cultural transition. *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology*, 32, 636–642.

- Ward, C. (1996). Acculturation. In D. Landis & R. S. Bhagat (Eds.), *Handbook of intercultural training* (2nd ed., pp. 106- 122). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Weigle, S.C. (2004). Integrating reading and writing in a competency test for non-native speakers of English. *Assessing Writing*, 9(1), 27–55.
- Wenli, Y. (2011). Academic and cultural experiences of Chinese students at an American university: A qualitative study. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 20(1).
- Wheeler, D. (2002). Testing service says GRE scores from China, South Korea, and Taiwan are suspect. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 48(49), 41.
- Williams, C. T., & Johnson, L. R. (2011). Why can't we be friends? Multicultural attitudes and friendships with international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35(1), 41–48.
- Wortman, P. M., & Napoli, A. R. (1996). A meta-analysis of the impact of academic and social integration on persistence of community college students. *Journal of Applied Research in the Community College*, 4(1), 5-21.
- Yan, K., & Berliner, D. (2011). An examination of individual level factors in stress and coping processes: Perspectives of Chinese international students in the United States. *Journal of College Student Development*, 52, 523-542.
- Yang, B., & Clum, G. A. (1995). Measures of life stress and social support specific to an Asian student population. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, 17, 51–67.

- Yi Wang , Richard Harding & Li-Wei Mai (2012) Impact of cultural exposure on young Chinese students' adaptation in a UK business school. *Studies in Higher Education*, 37(5), 621-639, DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2010.536528
- Ying, Y.-W., & Liese, L. H. (1991). Emotional well-being of Taiwan students in the U.S: An examination of pre- to post-arrival differential. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 15, 345–366.
- Ying, Y. W., & Han, M. (2006). The contribution of personality, acculturative Stressors, and social affiliation to adjustment: A longitudinal study of Taiwanese students in the United States, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 30(5), 623-635.
- Xiang, Y. (2015). Exploring Chinese International Students' Conceptions of Academic Success in an American Graduate School (Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University).
- Zhou, G.; & Zhang, Z. (2014). A study of the first year international students at a Canadian university: challenges and experiences with social integration. *Canadian and International Education / Education canadienne et internationale*, 43(2), Article 7.
- Zhong, L., & Zhou, G. (2011). Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in their children's school education: High interest but low action. *Brock Education*, 20(2), 4-21.
- Zhang, Z.; & Zhou, G. (2010). Understanding Chinese international students at a Canadian university: perspectives, expectations, and experiences. *Canadian and International Education / Education canadienne et internationale*, 39 (3), Article 5. Available at: <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cie-eci/vol39/iss3/5>

APPENDICES**Appendix A****INTERNATIONAL M.Ed. STUDENT SURVEY**

1. **Gender** a) Female b) Male c) Other
2. **Age range** a) 21 - 25 b) 26 - 30 c) 31 – 35 d) 35+
3. **Length of time in Canada:** _____ years and _____ months

4. **Were you required to take any language improvement program as a condition of acceptance into the M. Ed. Program?**
a) Yes b) No

5. **When you entered the M. Ed program, did you find it difficult to communicate with native English speakers?**
a) No, I have had no difficulty communicating with native English speakers
b) Yes, at the beginning of my time in Canada. Now I can communicate with them easily
c) Yes, and it is still hard for me now

6. **How would you gauge the level of difficulty of the courses in the M. Ed program?**
a) Very easy b) Easy c) Moderate d) Difficult e) Very difficult

7. **If you identified the level of difficulty of the courses as Moderate, Difficult, or Very difficult, please RANK the following factors that you think contributed to the difficulty of courses (with “1” representing the most significant factor, “5” for the least significant factor)**
[] Number of required readings
[] Number of writing assignments
[] Unfamiliar instructional approaches
[] Low class participation

Insufficient communication with instructors

Others (Please specify: _____)

8. Who did you approach first for assistance when you had academic questions?

- a) Peers b) The instructor c) Campus support service

9. How many hours on average did you spend on work associated with your studies each week (excluding class hours)?

- a) Less than 5 hours b) 5 to 10 hours c) 10 to 15 hours d) More than 15 hours

10. Where did you usually do work associated with your studies?

- a) Alone on campus
b) With friends on campus
c) Alone in a private setting
d) With friends in a private setting

11. Have you had any personal contacts with instructors (excluding course-related contacts)?

- a) Not at all b) Rarely c) Sometimes d) Frequently
e) Very frequently

12. Which type of classes do you prefer to take?

- a) Classes enrolling international cohort students only
b) Classes enrolling both international and domestic students

13. How many native English-speaking friends do you have?

- a) None b) One or two c) More than two

14. If you have native English-speaking friends, how did you meet them (circle all applicable options)?

- a) I met them in a class we shared

- b) I met them during a campus event
- c) I met them socializing off campus
- d) I met them at a religious institution
- e) Not applicable

15. How satisfied are you with each of the following components of the program?

	Not at all satisfied	Little satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Curriculum					
Class instruction					
Professor guidance					
Faculty support					
Academic environment					
Social environment					
Overall program					

16. Would you recommend the program to others?

- a) Yes
- b) Not sure
- c) No

17. Was this program your first 'international education' choice?

- a) Yes
- b) No

18. Please list the three biggest challenges you have experienced since you entered the program:

19. Please list three things you like best about the program:

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

20. Please list three things you are most unsatisfied with the program:

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____

21. What suggestions do you have for improvement of the program? (use the back side of the page if necessary)

Thanks for your cooperation!

Appendix B

M. Ed. STUDENTS INTERVIEW

Interviews will be guided by the following questions, but they are subject to change based on different situations of individuals.

1. What is your background: education, family, etc.
2. Why did you choose Canada as your graduate study destination? And why did you choose current university?
3. What do you think of the courses in the international MED program (curriculum, class instruction, academic and social environment)?
4. What are the differences between Chinese and Canadian classes?
5. What are the differences between Canadian and Chinese learning environments (education values, pedagogical approaches, etc)?
6. What were the most challenges you have experienced in your study?
7. How do you cope with these challenges (whom will you ask for help, why, how many hours are spent on studies)?
8. How do you feel the support from the faculty or university for your study?
9. How do you fit in Canadian culture (e.g. making native friends, going to church, volunteer work, etc.)?
10. In which way have you changed after being in Canada for more than one year?
11. What are your plans after graduation? Do you plan on staying in Canada? What are your career plans?
12. In conclusion, what do you like the most and least of your sojourn at the program?
13. Any suggestions for the improvement of the program.

Appendix C

Recruitment Letter for Survey

Dear _____,

My name is Tian Liu and I am a student from Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. It is my pleasure to invite you to participate in a one-time survey. The research is about the learning experiences of the international cohort in M.Ed. (Master of Education) program, conducted by Tian Liu and Dr. Zhou. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Tian Liu by liu18v@uwindsor.ca. You can also contact Dr. Zhou, Supervisor of this research by gzhou@uwindsor.ca.

The interview will take approximately 15 minutes. Participation is voluntary. The information will be used for my thesis and potential, subsequent research.

You have right to withdraw from the study any time prior to data transcription. A brief summary of result will be available to all participants. The University of Windsor Research Ethic Board has cleared this study.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Tian Liu

liu18v@uwindsor.ca

Appendix D

Recruitment Letter for Interview

Dear _____,

My name is Tian Liu and I am a student from Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. It is my pleasure to invite you to participate in a one-time interview. The research is about the learning experiences of the international cohort in M.Ed. (Master of Education) program, conducted by Tian Liu and Dr. Zhou. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Tian Liu by liu18v@uwindsor.ca. You can also contact Dr. Zhou, Supervisor of this research by gzhou@uwindsor.ca.

The interview will take approximately one hour. Each interviewee will receive 20 dollars for compensation. I would like to audio- tape your interview. The information will be used for my thesis and potential, subsequent research.

You have right to withdraw from the study any time before data transcription. A brief summary of the results will be available to all participants. The University of Windsor Research Ethic Board has cleared this study.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Tian Liu

liu18v@uwindsor.ca

Appendix E

Consent Form (Survey)

You are asked to participate in a research study “Learning Experience of Students in the Master of Education Program at a Canadian University” conducted by Tian Liu and Dr. Zhou, from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. Results of this research will be contributed to Tian Liu’s thesis.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Tian Liu by liu18v@uwindsor.ca. You can also contact Dr. Zhou, Supervisor of this research by gzhou@uwindsor.ca.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to investigate the learning experience of students in M. Ed. program (international cohort) such as academic challenges, social integration and language barriers within the context of Canada’s diverse culture.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

1. Provide signed consent.
2. Complete a one- time arrangement survey which will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.
3. You may be invited to complete a separate interview at a later time.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There is no anticipated risk within this study. Some participants may experience difficulty with discussing sensitive topics.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There is no direct benefit for participants.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

There will be no compensation for participants.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

Participants' identities will be highly protected and secured by the investigator. Audio tapes will be transcribed and locked.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participants are allowed to withdraw from the project any time before data is interpreted and analysed.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS

A brief summary of the research will be available to participants.

Web address: _____www.uwindsor.ca/reb_____

Date when results are available: _____approximately 2016/03/31_____

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

These data may be used in subsequent studies, in publications and in presentations.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

CONSENT OF PARTICIPATION

I understand the information provided for the study Learning Experience of Students

in the Master of Education Program at a Canadian University as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form. Handing in my survey reflects my consent for participation.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study Learning Experience of Students in the Master of Education Program at a Canadian University as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix F

Letter of Information to Participate in Interviews

Learning Experience of Students in the Master of Education Program at a Canadian University:

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Tian Liu and Dr. Zhou, from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. Results of this research will be contributed to Tian Liu's thesis.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact Tian Liu by liu18v@uwindsor.ca. You can also contact Dr. Zhou, supervisor of this research by gzhou@uwindsor.ca.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to investigate the learning experience of students in M.Ed. program (international cohort) such as academic challenges, social integration and language barriers within the context of Canada's diverse culture.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

1. Provide signed consent.
2. Participate in an interview that will take roughly one hour.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There is no anticipated risk within this study. Some participants may experience difficulty with discussing sensitive topics.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There is no direct benefit for participants. This research might help faculty to know the

perspective of students in this new program, so that they can refine the pedagogy in order to enrich learners' learning and sojourn experience in Canada.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

You will receive \$20 for participating in the interview.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Participants' identities will be highly protected and secured by the investigator. Audio tapes will be transcribed and locked.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participants are allowed to withdraw from the project any time before data is interpreted and analysed.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS

A brief summary of the research will be available to participants.

Web address: _____www.uwindsor.ca/reb_____

Date when results are available: _____approximately 2016/03/31_____

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

These data may be used in subsequent studies, in publications and in presentations.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study Learning Experience of Students in the Master of Education Program at a Canadian University as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study.

I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix G

CONSENT FOR AUDIO TAPING

Chinese international students in M.Ed. program:

Learning experience of students in the Master of Education program at a Canadian university:

I consent to the audio-taping of interviews.

The research is about the learning experiences of the international cohort in M.Ed. (Master of Education) program, conducted by Tian Liu and Dr. Zhou. I will discuss my own experiences and perspectives regarding academic integration with Tian Liu during the interview. I understand these are voluntary procedures and that I am free to withdraw at any time by requesting that the taping be stopped. I also understand that my name will not be revealed to anyone and that taping will be kept confidential. Tapes are filed by number only and stored in a locked cabinet.

The destruction of the audio tapes will be completed after transcription and verification. I understand that confidentiality will be respected and that the audio tape will be for professional use only.

(Research Participant)

(Date)

VITA AUCTORIS

NAME: Tian Liu

PLACE OF BIRTH: Foshan, China

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1992

EDUCATION: Guangdong Medical University, China

B.Sc. in Psychology

2010

University of Windsor, Windsor ON, Canada

M.Ed. in Educational Administration

2016