

**Connecting Higher Education and the Chinese workplace: What makes a Chinese graduate with an Australian qualification employable in China?**

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**By  
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## **Declaration**

I, Fiona Henderson, declare that the PhD thesis entitled “Connecting Higher Education and the Chinese workplace: what makes a Chinese graduate with an Australian qualification employable in China”, is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Fiona Henderson

Date

## **Abstract**

This thesis gives a cameo of the perceptions of graduating students, lecturers and employers about the range of skills needed by business degree students to successfully obtain employment in China. This research commences with an investigation of the role and development of personal, interpersonal, workplace and career related skills in higher education students which have been discussed amongst educators, employers and professional bodies for many years in Australia.

There is now some agreement in Australia about what graduate skills are sought by employers and how those skills are being developed within the education system. This is not so apparent in China where very few studies have looked at what skills are necessary to ensure initial employment success for business degree students. At the same time, little has been done to make the curriculum the explicit medium for developing employability skills in China.

This research presents a framework which emphasises the dynamic and complex interrelationships between a business degree curriculum that is taught in Australia and China. Participants are all from mainland China; they include business lecturers, business students, and employers of business degree graduates. The complexity is compounded by language, cultural, social and educational differences between Australia and China and between the researcher and her participants. The context was deemed to be critical and the methodology adopted enabled the context to be described and the data collected and analysed from the perspective of creating new theory. Hence a phenomenological / adaptive theory approach combining archival, quantitative and qualitative methods is used to investigate what aspects of a Bachelor of Business degree developed in one Australian university are perceived as important skills when taught in one Chinese university. The skills investigated were categorised as personal characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills.

The adaptive theory results indicate that while the curriculum has both explicit and implicit references to skills outcomes, Chinese students and Chinese lecturers do not always value these as employability / workplace skills in the same way as Chinese employers. The results also indicate that Chinese employers have other skill requirements besides those focused on by employers in Australia. In fact connections between educational and business practices in

China have unique historical and contemporary political drivers. Furthermore, there are collaborative opportunities to expand the current relationships that exist between industry and professional bodies and educational institutions in China. The findings of this research thus contribute to the theory building process regarding a Chinese adaptation of western graduate attributes that is meaningful and relevant to employers in China. The responsibility however for the development of such attributes is not always clear and currently the degree of overlap between graduate attributes and employability skills is less than that which exists in Australia.

There are transnational education implications arising from the results of this research for university marketing staff and academics who design and develop business degree programs with a focus on employability which may occur outside Australia. For example, while some skills developed within the curriculum have a seemingly internationally understood meaning, others such as “work effectively in settings of social and cultural diversity”, “show commitment”, “risk taker”, “think critically”, “be creative”, “show innovation”, and the role of *guanxi* in building relationships need to be explicitly localised, contextualised and marketed / communicated to the relevant students, lecturers and employers.

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## Chapter One Introduction

### 1.0 Personal and professional curiosity

I have been fortunate to have travelled widely, an appetite whetted by being an Exchange Student to Portugal while in secondary school. Each subsequent international experience has been an adventure into new ideas and has reinforced my belief that small, seemingly unimportant differences can in fact be significant. In the early 2000s my role as an Academic Language and Learning (ALL) lecturer at one of the newer Australian universities brought me into frequent contact with an increasing number of Chinese students studying the Bachelor of Business (B Bus), a course designed with input from Australian employers. We seemed to be on an uncharted journey, replete with anticipated differences but also filled with jarring cultural surprises. In particular there were the new cultural spaces of a joint venture teaching program in a China that was ‘opening up’ at that time. China was joining the World Trade Organisation; was setting ambitious national goals for a greater percentage of the population to be educated for a minimum of nine years; was increasing access to higher education (Li, Wilson & Doran 2009); and also changing the employment landscape towards a focus on individual rather than state responsibility for employment. All of these required sensitive mediation and the implications needed to be understood for the success of the joint venture teaching program.

My curiosity increased with each teaching visit to China and with the growing appreciation that the dynamic Chinese context was providing subtle differences to the same academic qualification. Chinese students studying in Melbourne and Chinese students undertaking the same Australian qualification in China were experiencing the Bachelor of Business course quite differently.

As an ALL lecturer, my approach to effectively developing the academic skills of any student is to build on their existing knowledge and ways of thinking; an approach known currently as student-centred learning (Dewey 1966; Kift 2008; Tinto 2009; Vygotsky 1978). This led to conversations with the Chinese students about their education, their hopes and their aspirations. A recurring theme was the then perceived value of an Australian qualification in China, even though the students were unable to identify what precisely it was in the qualification that was valued. Nor did they articulate how lasting this value would be. They also, not surprisingly given their lack of workplace experience, did not know how they would market their qualification or promote themselves when it came time to find their first professional position in China. Finally, for those Chinese students completing their Australian qualification in China, and also for those completing their Australian qualification in Australia, there were a number of teaching and learning activities that just ‘did not make sense’. A curriculum that does ‘not make sense’ to the students is not going to engage them, and it is not likely to be fully utilised for finding employment. The question was: were these activities ‘not making

sense' due to a combination of unfamiliar teaching and/or learning practices, or content, or a cultural disconnection with the Chinese context? In short, was the qualification not only being experienced differently but also were the skills developed within it going to be used differently or even different skills required?

These conversations, which still occur today, provoked my interest in what it means from a Chinese perspective to internationalise; what the different national drivers are for educational development; and what home country employers know about and value in an overseas qualification. In my journey which has been both geographic and cultural, I have acquired new words (Chinese and English), explored new concepts, been regularly reminded of how behaviours are interpreted differently in different cultures; learnt the importance of relationships, about harmony and about a different educational and working environment.

In 2005 when this research journey started, transnational education from the Chinese perspective was not well understood; today a more sophisticated, collaborative understanding exists about both the complexities and mutual benefits of internationalisation, and the national drivers. The journey has clearly provided an ontological development as well as an epistemic one. This thesis contributes to a growing body of research by examining the nexus of employment and higher education in China.

## **1.1 Overview to Chinese educational context**

With the acceleration of educational reforms in the 1980s, the Chinese central government gradually relaxed controls and granted higher education institutions greater decision-making power over finances, teaching plans, materials and curricula (Yin & White 1994), subtly changing forms of knowledge and power (Hayhoe 1989). In 1985 the role of Higher Education in China was to produce the graduates, or rather, human capital needed by its economic modernisation program:

Education must serve socialist construction, which in turn must rely on education. Our massive socialist modernization programme requires us not only to give full rein to the skilled people now available and to further enhance their capabilities, but also to train, on a large scale, people with new types of skills who are dedicated to the socialist cause and to the nation's economic and social progress into the 1990s and the early days of the next century (CCP 1985 cited in Agelasto & Adamson 1998, p. 3).

What did the government mean at that time for education to produce graduates needed for the economic modernisation program in China? How would a statement about the role of higher education in China read now, more than 20 years later? The answer to the first question was that it meant finding qualified staff, rationalising curricula, allocating resources and building facilities. The

focus then was to educate increasing numbers of people, particularly in the new technologies, and to foster a redirection in language education from Russian to English, reflecting a change in economic and political connections. To achieve these objectives there were two responses i) foreign lecturers were brought in to teach and ii) Chinese students were permitted to study overseas. In other words, long before the term internationalisation was being extolled as a curriculum requirement, China, along with other countries (for varied reasons) had a form of internationalised education. Later as Zhang (2003, p. 53 cited in Skyrme 2008) explained, to build up the number of trained personnel required to continue economic prosperity, the government supported temporary study abroad. The official explanation and ambitious goals of the Ministry of Education included:

During the process of implementing the strategy of ‘Rejuvenating China through Science and Education’ and ‘Develop China by Talent’ and developing an overall well-off society, the Chinese government will further promote the sustainable, healthy, cohesive and rapid development of education, build up a perfect national educational system and a lifelong learning system, produce billions of high qualified labors [sic], millions of specialized professionals and a large group of outstanding innovative talents, and promote a close integration between education and innovation in science and technology, economic construction, culture prosperity and social development (Ministry of Education PRC 2004).

The answer to the question of what it meant for education to produce graduates needed for the economic modernisation program in 2009, probably *read* similarly to previously. In practice, however, it meant a focus on higher qualifications for teaching staff, and perhaps some focus on the non-technical skills of graduates; a two-way exchange between China and the rest of the world might contain similar wording but with a more sophisticated imperative. According to Wu (2004) educational exchanges and collaboration with other countries needed to explicitly focus on Chinese requirements; while according to the Chinese Education Research Network (CERNET) (2005) and the Ministry of Education (2010), international engagement was seen as being vital for the development of Chinese education. All three positions are consistent with the earlier pragmatic position which emphasised:

- involvement with international educational institutions;
  - benefits from international progress in research;
  - creation of enterprising centres with financial support;
  - international exchange and collaboration in order to make Chinese education globalised;
  - international student recruitment, visiting experts, international top academic conferences and collaboration, involving English-Chinese teaching courses with original learning resources;
- and

- establishment of long-term relationships with foreign universities (Lu 2002).

The stratified Chinese educational system that links top universities to the best jobs has led to a preference for overseas education over low level, provincial Chinese universities (JWT Education 2008). In a culture that has long valued education, a foreign qualification completed in English was thought to be another way to secure a better future (Gu 2005, p.85 from Skyrme 2008), and was perceived to have more practical modern teaching and learning components. This perception about the quality of the overseas course has generated an inadvertent artefact by the enhancement of graduates' migration opportunities. Immigration was obviously not a goal of the Chinese government, and enticements<sup>1</sup> to students to return and contribute to China's development of human capital have been subsequently implemented.

To determine the meaning of education as the production of graduates required for the economic modernisation program did not seem then nor did it, until 2009, to require any significant integration of Chinese education and Chinese business interests. Yet this has occurred. Its characteristics were not immediately apparent to me as a Western researcher: education in China was not student-centred, it was not directed at enriching an individual nor was it concerned about developing an individual's full potential; rather the purpose of education was to meet the needs of society (Agelasto & Adamson 1998, p. 410). Chinese society like all societies has its own unique drivers, limitations, and business directions and models. Education in China existed to serve the nation's centrally-controlled economic and hence business needs, which is why some state owned enterprises had their own training orientated universities. At the same time, due to political objectives and to the sheer size and complexity of the education system and businesses in China, discerning, let alone acting on, the connections between these two entities generally has not always been a popular or successful activity. The Higher Education Law of 1998 allowed for changes from central to provincial institutional funding which, as well as permitting greater academic autonomy, could for the first time provide the flexibility, creativity and innovation needed to better align education with a range of employment opportunities. This was one of the first legislative changes that recognised the advantages of providing graduates with skills that meet many employers' needs.

A planned economy, one controlled by government intervention such as China, requires knowledge of what skills it can draw upon and knowledge of where best to place people with those skills. In China this was implemented as a government administrative task without a fine level of detailed job analysis or skills definition. As a result, prior to the 1998 Education Act<sup>2</sup>, tertiary curricula focused on job

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<sup>1</sup> Eg: local benefit packages, research funding, employer subsidies, residency permits, better housing (Hays 2008; Rosen & Zweig 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Post 1998 provincial areas were able to determine educational needs, including specific technical skills.

specific technical skills. The downside to such a focus was that occasionally skills were developed in people who did not want the skills and who were neither intrinsically nor extrinsically motivated to use them. For example, high achieving students were streamed into the Sciences even though their high marks were achieved in Humanities-based subjects. By contrast, a market economy (towards which China is steadily moving) is “characterised by volatility, competitiveness, openness and information network[s]. It requires a large supply of trained professionals and technical personnel who are practical, flexible, versatile, international and innovative” (Agelasto & Adamson 1998, p. 4). The principle of supply and demand requires both businesses and people to be able to re-structure, re-focus and re-train accordingly and at speed; soft rather than technical skills can assist the process (for example: Barrie 2006; Law, Wong & Wang 2004; Precision Consultancy 2007; Turner & Acker 2002; Yorke & Knight 2003).

China’s move from a planned to a market economy has highlighted the need for a different relationship between education and business organisations. In the early days of its market economy being a graduate was sufficient to ensure employment. From the 2000s onwards, with more graduates, greater workplace and organisational diversity and changing economic imperatives, the space between the theoretical requirements and the reality of what exists has become a key issue: imbalances were being seen between the total numbers of qualified workers and the numbers of jobs requiring these qualifications (Campbell et al. 2001). The over-supply existed at the same time as employers complained that their workforces lacked certain skills. The apparent paradox arises from the recruitment and selection focus on qualifications (as stated by job specifications and advertisements) which “are often only loose indicators of the skills actually required at work” (Felstead, Gallie & Green 2002, pp. 78-9). To develop the required workplace skills, in 2009 the Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiaobao called for curriculum reform to enable students to “think, practise and create” in courses that “meet the needs of the market and China’s economic and social development” (Patton 2009, p. 1). One way to ensure that students are better prepared for the workplace is to integrate theoretical academic learning with practical workplace learning (Billett 2001). This requires education and businesses to have mutually supportive, direct, “mature” (Billett 2008, p. 53) relationships. The move to more decentralised education in China may encourage the development of relationships that previously were mediated by a central government.

### **1.1.1 Graduate employment perspective derived from the Chinese popular press**

From the following brief review of the popular English press in China that informed the early stages of this enquiry, I have concluded that any adaptations made to Chinese educational practices to make graduates more ready for the market economy have not occurred as effectively as possible. The review highlighted a need for further research into the Chinese situation and the potential connections between Chinese higher education and the requirements of Chinese business directions.

The popular press developed my outsider perspective about graduate employment issues in China, but as a source of information in any nation it should be viewed critically (Arke & Primack 2009; Silverblatt 2001). Nevertheless for an exclusively English speaking visitor to China or for the researcher as an Australian teacher in China, with regards to information about Chinese higher education, it represents the view of the government and one that is often the primary not secondary, source of information. The validity of this approach is confirmed by Agelasto and Adamson (1998, p. 399) who state that “an especially effervescent [acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the term] source of news is the nation’s English language newspaper, *China Daily*, a purpose of which is to tell the foreign audience what the Chinese government wants it to hear”. On that basis and recognising that its purpose is reporting rather than exploring ideas, a chronological sampling revealed that during 1996 English language Chinese newspaper headlines reported optimistically about employment opportunities for Chinese university graduates. Headlines such as ‘Chinese graduates sail into jobs’ were typical (Scott 1996, 19 July, p.12). From 1996 to 1998, the newspaper discussions centred on changes in traditional employment patterns in China, promoting the idea that graduates may need to find their own jobs: ‘Just how far away are we from self-determined job selection?’ (Gan 1997, p. 90) read one paper, and ‘Six thousand Beijing college graduates to choose their own jobs’ (‘Six thousand Beijing college graduates to choose their own jobs’ 1998, p. 68). China’s policy changes continued to be portrayed in early 1999 as ‘Glad Tidings for Job Hunters’ (‘Employment: From single choice to multi-option (Cover story)’ 1999, 15 Feb, p.24) but from early 2000 onwards the tone of the articles became less buoyant and more critical. Issues such as employers discriminating against women graduates, employers making judgments based solely on the university attended, employers preferring postgraduate qualifications, and graduates having unrealistic expectations, were all discussed. In 2003 headlines read: ‘Faces of Frustration’, ‘Educated and Unemployed’, ‘Graduates Feel Employment Crunch’. In 2004 employment difficulties began to extend to returning overseas graduates. By 2005 the headlines read boldly: ‘Chinese graduates lack jobs’ (Delaney 2005). The *People’s Daily* on 1 December 2005 carried an article about the incongruences faced by test-based education in China and elsewhere:

Another challenge faced by China is [the] issue of quality education. At present, most countries in the world still adopt a test-oriented educational mode, which does not comply with the economic developing trend. ... The future society needs innovative talent adaptive to changes, capable of solving problems, and that knows how to learn efficiently. To cultivate such type of personnel, China should train a high-quality and professional teaching staff. (Xinhuanet 2005, p. 1)

The article ‘China’s Number Crunch’ clearly states that there are many graduates but “as few as 10 per cent have the skills that internationally operating companies look for in service jobs” (McKenzie

2006). With most students by then being self-funded, the instant effect on universities was the slower repayment of student loans: “Tuition loans are available to most students but, with graduate unemployment rampant – more than a million of this year's graduates have yet to find work – around one in five do not repay their loans” (Delaney 2007) and while emphasising the poor economic conditions, the article did not explore a graduate skills gap. The 2008 Global Financial Crisis that in the USA caused bankruptcies and retrenchments had some impact on business activity in China (Korporaal 2009). Both the Chinese and Australian governments invested in job creation, yet newspaper headlines such as ‘for 12m [million] job seekers’ (Chen 2009) appeared. Although these figures included migrant and unskilled workers as well as university-educated job seekers, the press articles as a collection, suggest a range of issues that are significant barriers to employment and which have still not been fully addressed:

- The slow development of vocational skills;
- The mismatch between jobs and tertiary graduates’ specializations;
- The inability of institutes to keep pace with modernization;
- Students’ lack of independent thinking and study skills; and
- Over-centralised and over-rigid educational administration (Lewin et al. 1994 cited in Agelasto & Adamson 1998, p. 5)

These issues including Yang and Lin’s (2010) concern regarding the increased employability focus in Chinese vocational colleges, will be explored further in Chapter Three “Education in China”.

## **1.2 Link to Australian educational context**

Higher education in Australia has developed a culture of “cheerful patriotism”, “communicative openness”, “respect for merit” and an “instinct for fairness and a gift for improvisation” yet there is also conformity and cynicism (Marginson 2008a, p. 12). These are also characteristics which may be observed in the Australian workplace. While it would be hard to determine in which context they first developed, contemporaneously there are networks and alliances between tertiary institutions and industry responsible for mutual transference of information. The Australian government, for example, funds annual grants and research projects that emphasise the link between higher education and the workplace, that are often followed up with education policies and procedures and further funding to strengthen the interaction. For instance the concept of graduate attributes in Australia developed in this way. In contrast, while workforce planning and education have experienced some integration in China, the relationship between Chinese higher education and Chinese workplaces has developed independently (Liu et al. 2008). The drivers for this independent development in China can be attributed to a combination of politics, economic priorities, traditions, geography and population size. The Chinese and Australian educational models have developed from significantly different

ideologies. Higher Education is the third largest export market in Australia after coal and iron ore (Universities Australia 2009). On an economic level, a ramification of Australia being a free market is that university funding has evolved into an economically-driven business model (Gallagher 2000; Marginson 1997). It is a model that has generated a \$15.5 billion market for international students (Slattery & Trounson 2009) but been suffering in recent times due to the Global Financial Crisis and the loss in value of investment funds, the defunct full-fee paying program for domestic students (Slattery & Trounson 2009) and inconsistent educational standards (Marginson 2008c)<sup>3</sup>. The different roots of the educational ideologies contribute to unique understandings of quality and educational standards (Burnapp 2010; Ziguras 2008). The ongoing impact of different stakeholder goals, ideologies and pedagogies on transnational<sup>4</sup> education practices and business models and national policies is still being determined (Ziguras 2008); Skyrme (2008, p. 9) reports on a personal exchange with a Chinese student in 2004 who, back then, said a “foreign academic degree is not valued much by employers nowadays” and at the same time Rastall (2004, p. 6) highlighted concerns in the Chinese press about increasing unemployment rates of students with overseas awards.

### 1.3 Joining Australian and Chinese education

By 2006 the majority of Australian universities had some sort of educational relationship with a Chinese higher education institution (Wu & Yu 2006). These relationships were and are, highly competitive and have improved the model and quality of internationalisation of Australian (and Chinese) higher education (Henderson & Pearce 2011; Liu et al. 2008). China is both an exporter of Chinese students and a host country for international students (either Chinese nationals undertaking a foreign qualification in China or non-Chinese nationals undertaking Chinese courses). Within China, total student enrolments numbered nearly 20 million by the end of 2004, but the number has been projected to be 25 million by 2010 (Quality Assurance Agency 2006; EDU 2002 in Wu & Yu 2006). The positive influences for Chinese higher education have come from Chinese universities involved in international collaborations (see 1.1; 3.3) trying to align with overseas advances in higher education program structures and teaching methods, and in the development of genuine, two-way exchange and co-operative programs so that students can stay in China and receive an overseas qualification at a more affordable cost (Liang 2004 in Wu & Yu 2006). In 2004 Australia offered the largest number of international education programs in China, followed by USA, Canada, France and the United Kingdom; additionally, there were over 36,000 Chinese students studying in Australia. The largest numbers of co-operative (joint) programs were in the areas of management, economics, accounting and education (Adams & Song 2009). Four years later, in 2008, there were a total of 65,149 mainland

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<sup>3</sup> Expectations of an excellent standard of education are also not met by international students in the UK (British Council 2004).

<sup>4</sup> DEEWR & IEAA 2009, p.88 “transnational education: also known as offshore or cross-border education – the study of programs leading to an Australian qualification for credit in countries other than Australia”.



Chinese students enrolled in higher education courses in Australian universities of whom 44,752 were enrolled in Management and Commerce courses (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations 2009).

One area that remains “unjoined” and still to be “reviewed” is the role of graduate attributes; that is, the skill outcomes of a qualification. Some Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in China have started examining the skills of their graduates using terms akin to graduate attributes (Beijing Jiaotong University 2009). In a western context these refer to a set of general, technical and professional skills aside from theoretical knowledge. The Chinese HEI focus is amongst other factors, partly in response to pressure from the Chinese government to maintain high employment levels, partly in response to Chinese businesses adopting these western terms and partly in response to international cooperative programs now using this language (Ministry of Education PRC, 2010). With global economic competitiveness directing educational trends, plus a market place in which institutions compete for students and funding, it is assumed that the stakeholders should favour institutions which produce graduates who are more employable (Harvey, Locke & Morey 2002), who already possess multicultural workplace competencies (Chang & Tharenou 2004). Hence a new driver for higher education in China might be a Chinese version of graduate skills. The question that therefore arises is ‘What makes some graduates in China more employable than other graduates?’ One answer is that graduates may be able to differentiate themselves by their use of graduate skills and how they market these to potential employers. This leads to subsequent questions ‘What are the graduate skills that Chinese graduates are promoting to Chinese employers?’, ‘What are the graduate skills valued by Chinese employers?’ and ‘What is the difference between graduate skills and employability skills?’ It is possible that by promoting graduate attributes effectively as employability skills might involve different factors when comparing China and Australia.

### **1.3.1 Globalising without internationalising?**

Western universities while sometimes being protective of research and intellectual property have had a history of information exchange, learning from each other and operating locally, nationally and globally. Terms such as globalisation and internationalisation came into usage to describe the aims of new economies and the effects of new technologies. According to Marginson (2008a, p. 1) globalisation “is not a single, universal trend but is filtered by national and local factors. It is highly nuanced by geography, history, policy, culture and language; and by type of institution”. The distinction used in this thesis is that globalisation means the worldwide spread of business opportunities, whereas internationalisation is the dimension of globalisation that recognises national, cultural and other differences (Middlehurst 2002). Internationalisation as such need not lead to any converging practices or loss of national identity (Parsons & Fidler 2004). Rather as Lewis (1998) and Kwong, Wang and Clifton (2010) argue, it is recognising the enduring differences of individual

societies and cultures. On the other hand, Jin and Cortazzi (2001), Kingston and Forland (2008) and Leask (2009) argue that internationalisation should enhance cultural synergy by foregrounding cultural influences in order to integrate various educational learning cultures. Ma and Vermaak (2010) report that Chinese universities want more international students “to study and do research in China and so enrich Chinese academic life and in turn be enriched by Chinese culture; on the other hand, it needs to keep Chinese universities 'Chinese', that is, attractive to Chinese students”. Marginson (2010, p. 1) talks of integration, convergence and “a single inter-dependent world” and blames the internet and air travel for “communicative globalisation”. Internationalisation then, confusingly, covers a spectrum of interpretations and activities from the simple, static and instrumental, to the complex, strategic and whole-of-institution (Bartell 2003, p.46; Leask 2007). Or, it could be three stages, as identified by Middlehurst and Woodfield (2007): isolated international activity may become a formalised international strategy which may in turn become an integrated internationalisation process.

Marginson (2008b, p. 9) expands on the impact of globalisation on universities:

To higher education globalization has brought the accelerated mobility of researchers, university administrators and students; the cross-border market in degrees partly sustained by globally mobile graduate work; global e-learning; transnational education and foreign campuses in East and Southeast Asia; global networking and alliances; twinning and other partnerships, and global referencing, including global rankings with their transformative effects. Research universities are now partly disembedded from local constituencies and nation-states via offshore activity, funding and accreditation.

Globalisation in this sense represents those international opportunities that have enabled transnational education. However it is possible to have transnational education without any internationalisation. According to Burnapp (2010, p. 5) “transnational education refers to programmes where students do not move across borders but follow a course provided by a foreign institution”. He supports the argument made by Victoria University (2005b) for maintenance of quality: “institutions and agencies involved in such provision must establish rigorous procedures concerning: due diligence; assuring of academic standards and quality; supporting collaborative partners in areas such as staff development; student admission and support; and external examining” (Burnapp 2010, p. 5).

For universities the process of internationalisation is critical to delivering a curriculum that enables graduates to work in a changing world. It involves reflection and action on many levels (Hassam 2007), including organisational change, curriculum innovation, staff development and student mobility (Rudzki 1998, p.16 in Skyrme 2008), as well as the political-economic and economic-business awareness, all of which take time to address. In the UK Knight (2004) highlighted the lack

of inclusion in university strategy, services and curricula of international and intercultural knowledge at that time. Australian universities are addressing issues of parochialism and racism partly through graduate attributes. However, disagreement exists over the ‘what’ and ‘how’, and there is tension regarding dependency between host governments and institutions on deployment of the income gained from international students at the expense of a quality experience for all students and staff (Marginson 2008a). Marginson notes that encouraged by scholarships for international students, the USA has more international students entering its higher education institutions than are travelling the other way. In “Australia, the UK and New Zealand international students ... help to finance the domestic tertiary education system” (Marginson 2008a, p. 4; Sharma 2010c, p.1).

Marginson, Ziguras and others argue that too often internationalisation and modernisation are euphemisms for westernisation (Sharma 2010b), evident in the indiscriminate importing of education that contain irrelevant ideas and values; and the profit seeking and the rush into international partnerships with inadequate research into socially and culturally-sensitive goals, often to the detriment of students and the universities (Sharma 2010b, p.1). Participants at the “Going Global 4” 2010 conference suggested that internationalisation also meant knowing one’s own region, that an international education is the responsibility of universities both to make students globally employable and to help the domestic economy by making local businesses more internationally competitive, and that therefore one model of international education was unlikely to suit all. Exploring these issues is integral to the current research.

Sharma reported on a new index that tracks policies “to quantify international collaboration, overseas branch campuses, joint academic programmes, publications and patents, academic and student mobility, visa policies, quality, access and recognition of foreign degrees” (Sharma 2010c, p. 1). The purpose is to identify what factors influence the movement of students and the degree of international collaboration that occurs. Of the 11 countries measured, Germany, Australia and Britain ranked first, second and third respectively; Australia and Britain scored highly for quality assurance and degree recognition, despite low scores for outbound study (Sharma 2010c) and despite the earlier mentioned inconsistent educational standards.

As this chapter has started to demonstrate - and the research of Knight (1997; 2004; 2005; 2003), Marginson (2008a; 2008b), Cuthbert (2002) and Allen and van der Velden (2005; 2005a) among others, acknowledges - the nature of the globalisation, and the depth and breadth of a mutually beneficial internationalisation of higher education is determined in each instance by internal and external forces, such as the regulatory framework of the nations and institutions involved (Middlehurst & Woodfield 2007) and the perceived importance of the cultural context. Burnapp’s

and Sharma's more recent research persuade us that the debate and research around these issues needs to continue.

### 1.3.2 Impact of culture

There is no doubt that cultural values impact on education systems and practices. The dilemma is knowing whose cultural values are dominating and what it means if some cultural values are being excluded. Ziguras (2008) confronts these ideological and pedagogical dilemmas. With the forces of globalisation and internationalisation changing business and education cultures, there is tension between the benefits of maintaining uniqueness and the benefits of promoting integration or a degree of "sameness". A tertiary curriculum designed to promote the skills required of workplace cultures of one country may be adaptable to suit other educational and business cultures if the traits being identified as belonging to one culture allow for significant individual variation. This thesis explores the impact of culture at many points, within the context of issues raised by the thesis.

## 1.4 Research questions and hypotheses

This thesis explores, within the context of Chinese-Australian educational relationships, the qualities and skills valued by employers in China. In order to examine these relationships the researcher has focused on one academic award. Hence the research question is *What qualities and skills does a Chinese graduate with an Australian Bachelor of Business need for employment in China?*

A quantitative way to explore the research question is via outcomes such as graduate employment data, student satisfaction surveys, student enrolment figures and student marks. These measures of effectiveness of education programs used by Australian universities rely on rating and grades obtained rather than paying attention to understanding how or why a program is effective. They permit only a partial analysis of the issue which the researcher sought to redress. With the increasing number of Australian transnational programs (IDP Education Australia 2002) there is rising interest in the *experience* of participating students. Even though "they are the ultimate 'insiders or experts'... the voice of the student[s are] conspicuously missing from research literature" (Jackson 1992 cited in Chapman & Pyvis 2005, p. 40). The voices of the lecturers of transnational program partners and the employers of the program's graduates within those countries have also been missing. This thesis will include the voices of Chinese partner institution lecturers, of graduating Chinese students and of a selection of Chinese employers, to consider what qualities and skills support the employability of Chinese graduates with an Australian Bachelor of Business (B Bus) in China.

In consideration of the environmental factors and the offshore voices, the research question has been operationalised to examine the educational link between graduates and their employability from the

perspective of Chinese graduating students, lecturers and employers. The complexity of the research warrants the statement of the hypotheses in a manner that demonstrates the interconnectedness and overlap of functional characteristics; in essence, the aspects explored in the hypotheses are not discrete. The questions and five exploratory and predictive hypotheses (H1 – H5) of this study are threaded through the enquiry of the thesis.

Educational literature derived from Australia, USA and the UK points to learning outcomes that promote a suite of graduate attributes matched to employer expectations. In contrast the Chinese literature indicates learning outcomes more closely aligned to a curriculum based on Chinese values which may be neo-Confucian (Wong & Slater 2002). At an operational level the two research questions are therefore:

1. What characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills being developed in the B Bus curriculum are particularly valued by Chinese employers?
2. What characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills are valued by Chinese employers but not developed or included in the B Bus curriculum?

Five hypotheses were investigated.

1. If Chinese employers, reflecting Chinese culture in general, value the traditional curriculum, then Chinese graduates of a western curriculum will not meet Chinese employer requirements unless they display appropriate Chinese employability skills.
2. If Chinese employers see the limitations of a wholly traditional curriculum; that is, they want a partially western one, then there will be some skills that they perceive as important in the western curriculum.
3. If Chinese lecturers were teaching the curriculum with the skills required by the Chinese workplace in mind, then the perceptions of Chinese lecturers and Chinese employers regarding certain skills and qualities would be similar.
4. If Australian universities have graduate attributes embedded in curricula that are not relevant in China, then Chinese lecturers and Chinese students will perceive these skills as less important; and
5. If students completing the VU Bachelor of Business in China or in Melbourne aim to find work in China, then they will similarly value the same skills and qualities.

These hypotheses set out to identify from the viewpoint of Chinese graduating students, lecturers and employers, whether or not ‘graduate skills’ can be inferred from the curriculum and teaching practices in China, and if the same curriculum delivered in two different environments develops noticeably

different characteristics. They also set out to determine if graduate skills are adequate in themselves to obtain employment in China.

## **1.5 Research design**

This study is conducted from the perspective of a Westerner, an important consideration as a potential limitation which is discussed in 5.9. A mixed method design has been applied and explained and the literature review addresses current curriculum development trends in several Western countries; government and higher education institutional-level policies which shape local and international tertiary programs and business directions; and the survey and interview tools for collecting data on graduate attributes. This study builds on research by Whitefield (2003), Peppas and colleagues (Peppas 2002; Peppas, Peppas & Jin 1999; Peppas & Yu 2005) and Skyrme (2008). The research explores through surveys, lecturers and graduating students' perceptions of what skills are being taught and what skills they perceive as necessary for employment. Interviews with lecturers were also conducted in order to analyse the educational constraints placed on them; and surveys and interviews were used to examine the Chinese employers' perceptions about their graduate employees.

## **1.6 Conceptual framework, validation, limitations and importance of study**

This research seeks to develop a framework for linking local knowledge and employment needs with the development and delivery of western programs in non-western settings. The framework should include not only the views of stakeholders, but also factors that have an impact on the graduates' learning, the employment environments and the employability skills such as educational directions, business structures, national business environment, international organisations, human resource management, culture and communication. The tacit proposition or assumption is that universally "life, work, management, organizations, industrial relations and institutions are culture-bound rather than culture-free" (Lowe 1998, p. 6) which, if accepted, applies to Australia as much as to China. The term 'culture-bound' suggests not only different social constructions of 'reality' (Lowe 1998), but also, 'bound' suggests a degree of longevity to the stability of the cultural patterns. This implies that a framework is possible, regardless of whether one agrees with Lowe's statement that culture is "more influential in collectivist societies than in individualistic societies" (Lowe 1998, p. 13). The framework will be refined as part of the research process. These ideas foreshadow and frame a discussion of structure and agency and culture and agency, with the researcher's added goal of minimising ethnocentrism as much as practically possible.

The study design uses both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis to present the argument from converging perspectives. Qualitative methods provide descriptions with respect to quantitative responses (Babbie 2004) and hence complement the quantitative methods (Patton 1990). In order to

determine the perceptions of the stakeholders, data was, as mentioned, collected through interviews and surveys (addressing Hypotheses 1-4). The use of interviews was particularly appropriate as the data collected included interpretations and impressions formed by the research participants. The semi-structured interviews (Creswell 2002) captured participant views about the relationship between government drivers, course content and capabilities of a new graduate. The surveys allowed graduating students, lecturers and employers to respond individually and in their own time, but also allowed for data from like groups to be combined and analysed using descriptive statistics (addressing Hypotheses 2-5). Data was collected in both Australia and China. The surveys were written in English, translated into Chinese, then back-translated to ensure equivalence. As the researcher is not a Chinese speaker, Chinese colleagues were approached to craft and translate the surveys, and explain the nuances of meaning from a Chinese cultural perspective. The use of Adaptive Theory methodology permitted a continued reviewing of data.

The Victoria University Bachelor of Business as taught in Melbourne and Liaoning, was the common curriculum. Data collection targeted the Bachelor of Business international Chinese students and their lecturers in China. The employer sample were all Chinese managers involved with employing graduates, introduced to the researcher through Chinese contacts.

The study investigates from an Australian educator's perspective, the relationship between outcomes of the graduate education that are in addition to technical knowledge such as critical thinking, ability to work in teams and problem solving (the rubric known formally as the VU Graduate Capabilities policy), the needs of the Chinese workplace, the desires of a cohort of Chinese employers and the cultural or cross-cultural underpinnings of the intended curriculum. Initially a review of Australian graduate attributes was undertaken, with an emphasis on the VU approach to Graduate Capabilities. Then the study identified the perceptions of higher education in China as understood by a sample of students, lecturers and employers.

The significance of this study lies in the new knowledge generated about the Chinese employment situation and the employee requirements from the perspective of human resource managers. It contributes also to an understanding of the connections that are possible with higher education, and specifically with the VU Bachelor of Business curriculum. The study suggests that knowledge of different organisational and ownership models can be profitably utilised by the graduate seeking employment in China. In the first instance, the outcomes of this study have the potential to change teaching emphasis and inform VU lecturers teaching offshore of local cultural requirements. However there is the broader implication regarding the validity of offshore programs for all tertiary educators who are teaching outside their home location. Thus it is an exploration of internationalising.

This study also generates new knowledge of contemporary educational practice; about what it means to internationalise learning and teaching and to develop contextually appropriate learning and teaching practices in differing cultures and contexts. Its main objective is to develop a frame of reference for identifying employability skills and graduate attributes in those countries that do not utilise a graduate attribute rubric. Identifying and understanding Chinese graduate attributes and employability skills form the practical focus of the framework. The application of this knowledge should inform future policy on graduate attributes especially as pertaining to internationalised education.

A further benefit deriving from this knowledge is its projected availability to VU staff and onshore students with the aim of promoting, developing and extending an awareness of employability skills over and above graduate attributes. This would be highly relevant to employers both onshore and internationally and will enable Chinese employers in particular to develop realistic expectations of Chinese graduates with Australian qualifications. Currently VU Graduate Capabilities are reflected and assessed to some extent in courses in a way that they may be translated practically or modified to match each local environment, but as yet nothing significant is either added or subtracted to reflect local cultural requirements. Doing so could enhance student engagement as well as relevancy and effectiveness of the program.

This study suggests that there are benefits to be derived from linking local knowledge and employment needs with the development and delivery of western programs in non-western settings. To summarise, the contribution of the research findings of this thesis to the broader literature relates to:

- research-based insights into the nature of the graduate attributes applicable to Chinese students studying at Victoria University;
- a framework for identifying graduate attributes and employability skills in non-Western communities through the case study of one qualification that is taught in both Australia and China;
- documentation of the needs of the Chinese business sector when engaging with graduate attributes as identified and used at Victoria University; and
- recommendation for informing graduating students in China of the importance of graduate attributes and employability skills as deemed applicable in Chinese and Australian contexts.

## **1.7 Structure of the thesis**

This thesis contains ten chapters. Chapter Two explores the literature on graduate attributes and their role in employment and internationalisation that has had some impact on the current research.



Chapter Three reviews developments within Chinese higher education. Chapter Four continues the Literature Review but with a focus on Chinese employment practices and business structures, and influences on them and education in China from Human Resource Management theory, cultural theories and professional bodies. Chapter Five examines, theoretically and practically, the different methodological approaches that this research could take and Chapter Six describes and justifies the method eventually adopted. Chapter Seven opens with a case study of one joint venture teaching program between Australia and China and presents the data from the graduates and their lecturers. Chapter Eight presents the employer data analysed and where appropriate, a comparison to the graduate and lecturer data. Chapter Nine discusses the implications of the findings and Chapter Ten, as the concluding chapter, reviews the research objectives, highlights the key research findings, reiterates the limitations of the current research and gives practical recommendations as well as recommendations for further research.

## 1.8 Summary

A personal journey and philosophy and a review of the political initiatives for higher education in China formed the basis for noting various unique environmental influences on educational developments in that nation. The following chapters provide an extensive literature review of influences on the trends of higher education, principally in Australia and China. As a result, the broad focus of this study is: the effects of globalisation on international education, international research into identifying graduate capabilities, factors which influence curricula renewal in China, and the selection practices and preferences of Chinese businesses that impact the employability skills needed by a graduate.

At present, despite a range of Australian government articles (Australian Education International 2008b; Australian Universities Quality Agency 2006; Department of Education Science and Training 2005a; 2006) and local and international literature on what internationalising a curriculum means, much of the *practice* focuses on adapting or extending subject specific knowledge. This is a limited view of internationalisation (Sanderson 2006) which could be expanded to also encompass global, regional, national, sector, institutional, faculty and student perspectives. The aim of internationalising a notion perceived as underpinning a particular curriculum is further complicated when the notion, eg graduate attributes, is not fully understood within Australia (Barrie et al. 2009). Furthermore, explanations become complicated when to ‘internationalise’ actually means in practice, to ‘localise’. The fact is that there is little research on non-western graduate attributes and how these may differ to local employability skills. This has the potential to diminish the relevance of an Australian course taught in a non-western location.

Finally, and with regards to the transnational and local educational environment in China, this study expands on existing research and understanding. To determine culturally specific graduate and employability skills, this study aligns employer feedback with student and lecturer perceptions in China about the learning and teaching focus of the curriculum. By determining specific skills required by employers in China, more informed choices can be made about transnational educational and local curricula developments. In other words, this study identifies ideas that might one day be termed Chinese graduate capabilities and employability skills and validates them through the perceptions of Chinese students, lecturers and employers.

## Chapter Two Western educational drivers: attributes, skills and competencies, internationalism

### 2.0 Introduction

The chapter begins with an overview of the discourse/language of graduate attributes and identifies a philosophical debate, ambiguous interpretations and inconsistencies within the terminology.

However, the primary purpose of the chapter is to present the researcher's hermeneutic which stems principally from an Australian perspective. From this starting point an international overview is provided to determine the value of 'attributes', and the issues surrounding their incorporation and operation into curricula, as well as pedagogy. Furthermore, research has been included that links employment outcomes with graduate skills, and the differing degrees of overlap between graduate attributes, employability skills and lifelong learning within different systems are examined.

The overarching ideal in Western universities is that a university education should be a valuable transformative experience that develops high order intellectual capacities to produce "autonomous, critical, reflective and articulate" students (Nightingale & O'Neill 1994, p.10). The aim is exciting; but the politicians and economists now ask 'How do we know if the aim is achieved?' The simplistic answer is to decide upon the outcomes, such as the graduate attributes, and then assess or measure each student's development of them. The complicated and contentious nature of the adjectival descriptors used to define the graduate attributes means that the how, why, role and significance of graduate attributes being taught is an ongoing discussion among curriculum developers.

There is no one model of graduate skills or outcomes of university education that caters for the disparate views and policies of educational staff and institutions around the world. Fallows and Stevens (2000) and Barrie et al. (2009) make the obvious argument that graduate skills need to be contextualised to fit with each university's mission and strategies; they must be aligned as well with assessment processes (Chalmers & Thomson 2008). Examples of the complications inherent in any form of curriculum development start with the terminology and the universality of the meaning of each graduate skill: what terms such as 'critical thinking', 'autonomy', 'valuing diversity' or 'collaboration' may mean within the Chinese or any educational context; plus how they are to be demonstrated, how they are taught and assessed, and how this may differ from other conceptualisations and applications of them (Kember 2000).

So, for example, how much independence, pro-activity, decision making, and individuality are to be contained within any definition of 'autonomy' are potentially infinite, and the nuanced emphases will be culturally specific (Kember 2000).. A further complication is that these desired higher order qualities are framed as outcomes when, in fact, they are to some extent pre-requisites of their own

achievement: you cannot develop autonomy without starting with some autonomy. Similarly, some level of acquaintance with the notion of ‘critical thinking’ is necessary before any advanced level of attainment, especially that required by a university graduate, can be said to have been achieved.

Skyrme (2008) provides an example which reinforces the need to know the Western educational drivers. She argues that critical thinking is not a universally applicable concept and is a fundamental difference between Western and Communist Chinese educational cultures. Skyrme (pp. 23-4) builds on the three conditions that Smith (1990) asserts are needed to demonstrate critical thinking: “adequate knowledge of the subject in question, a disposition to question the propositions made, and the authority allowed to express this questioning”. Skyrme (2008, p. 24) stresses cultural notions of respect for age, knowledge and status, interact to form a response; hence in China showing off critical thinking skills is being inappropriate even abhorrent:

The criteria for adequacy of knowledge for critiquing are set much higher in eastern educational traditions, in which, therefore, the disposition to question is not encouraged and the authority to express questions not experienced until a far more advanced achievement than undergraduate study.

The chapter includes studies based on Chinese students outside China (2.1.4) and in China (2.1.5). These studies focus on employability skills and cultural attributes such as politeness, relationships and face, rather than attributes developed predominantly through higher education. There is a short section on integrating into the formal curriculum, practice based learning, also known as Learning in the Workplace, which clearly links to the employability nature of many of the graduate attributes and is a prime example of a pedagogical difference between Chinese and Australian educational systems. The last section of this chapter discusses Internationalisation and what it means, and the tensions surrounding an expectation of, or requirement for, universality are examined.

### **2.0.1 Terms used within higher education and vocational education**

The Australian Higher Education Council defined attributes as a distinctly non-technical subset, separate to theoretical knowledge and other workplace skills. Besides stating that Australian graduates should operate professionally, internationally, the Australian Higher Education Council (HEC 1992 cited in Dearing 1997, Appendix 5) define what was expected from a course of study, as being a mix of:

- general skills, attributes and values, which should be acquired by all graduates regardless of their discipline or field of study. They include qualities such as critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, problem solving, logical and independent thought, effective communication and

related skills in identifying assessing and managing information; personal attributes such as intellectual rigour, creativity and imagination; and values such as ethical practice, integrity and tolerance;

- a body of knowledge which has two main purposes, the first to provide knowledge of an area and its theoretical base at a depth and detail appropriate to the level of the award, and the second to provide a vehicle for the refinement of generic skills; and
- professional/technical or other job related skills which graduates can apply immediately to their employment, some being occupation specific and others more general.

From a sophisticated linguistic analysis, to describe what graduates can do and what they have done in the UK, Harvey and Knight (2003) regard *assets* as very financial, *achievements* as too ‘completed’, and *attributes* as providing no sense of the hard work and processes involved in developing them.

Moreover, they do not accept *skills*, arguing that (2003, p. 6), such a term tends to:

- Focus on a (limited) list of employer-determined skills;
- Imply a competency or ‘tick-box’ approach;
- Suggest training for a job or profession rather than education for life;
- Underplay traditional academic abilities: critique, synthesis and analysis; and
- Rest on some dubious psychological and philosophical assumptions.

They do though settle on the term *attributes*, while being careful to “insist that attributes are not collected like stamps” (Harvey & Knight 2003, p. 6). Just as a student may have engaged in group work, which does not necessarily make the student a team worker, or imply that effectiveness as a team worker is unrelated to other factors, so it is with attributes, for which “continuing development is both desirable and likely” (Harvey & Knight 2003, p.6).

A survey by the researcher of Australia’s 38 universities shows repeated usage of certain terms to describe an Australian graduate (Appendix A). Both ‘graduate attributes’ and ‘graduate skills’ are used synonymously to refer to all technical and theoretical knowledge as well as the more tangible employability skills acquired through a particular course of study. The articulation of graduate attributes differs from educational institution to educational institution but all include distinct abilities related to research and inquiry; to information literacy; to personal and intellectual autonomy; to social, professional and cultural diversity; and to communication (University of Sydney 1994). Subsequent iterations (Victoria University 2008c) specifically mention employment and career factors.

The frequently cited definition of graduate attributes by Bowden et al. (2000) is the basis for the definition used in this thesis. It implies a personal educational transformation and along with it aspects of employability:

The qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution. These attributes include but go beyond the disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge that has traditionally formed the core of most university courses. They are qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future (Bowden et al. 2000, p.1).

In this thesis graduate attributes is the overarching term that includes knowledge, skills, capabilities, attributes, values and attitudes. In defining the components, knowledge refers to the academic, technical, cultural and theoretical knowledge that is taught. Skills, capabilities and attributes are interchangeable terms and refer to the application of knowledge; they can be methodically developed and therefore assessed. Values and attitudes are dispositions that can be modified if reflected on from an ethical, cultural or social perspective (Hager, Holland & Beckett 2002, p. 3). By comparison, personality traits are more inherent, constant behaviours. Employability skills are a combination of graduate attributes plus other specific personal, professional and cultural behaviours and knowledge that make a person employable. When reporting in this thesis on the research of others their own terminology is used.

Even though the definition is broad, semantic nuances and different perspectives can lead to major disagreements and misunderstandings. For Shippmann et al. (2000) the focus on skills as outcomes is simply a result of the trend towards competency modelling in human resource practice, that is the influence of human resource management on university education. For Allen et al. (2003) skills are considered a better tool for exploring the labour market than years of schooling or highest level of education, while for Gibbs (2004, p. 24) skills are an attempt to globalise educational policy. For other researchers (Luke 2003) skills serve a critical social role. Felstead et al. (2002, p. 20) note that authors such as Campbell et al. (2001) and the compilers of the National Skills Task Force (Department for Education and Employment 2000) seldom agree about what “skills” refer to and are influenced by their own particular interest in one or other theoretical standpoints:

This variety is evident from the empirical evidence on skills patterns, trends and future trajectories compiled by the National Skills Task Force and recently updated by Campbell *et al.* These reviews cover various aspects of skill and include: competence or proficiency in carrying out a task, that is the ability to do something well; the notion that skills are hierarchical and that skill levels are determined by the degree of complexity and discretion involved; and the view that there are different types of skills, including generic skills useable

across a range of occupations and vocational skills relevant to a particular occupation (Felstead et al. 2002, p. 20).

The term ‘employability skills’ includes aspects of graduate attributes, general skills, a level of theoretical knowledge and professional/technical skills. Knight and Yorke (2003, p. 7) use the term “employability skills” to refer to “a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefit themselves, the community and the economy”. Harvey and Knight are explicit in differentiating those skills necessary for purely *acquiring* employment from the skills needed to “succeed”: “Employability – having the attributes to succeed in employment – is significantly different from actually getting employment, which is affected by a range of extraneous factors” (2003, p. 5). Employability skills are often defined by employers through professional bodies or industry groups.

Generic skills and graduate attributes are terms commonly used in Higher Education (HE), whereas in Vocational Education and Training (VET), the western literature in this field variously uses terms such as generic skills, competency skills, key skills, transferable skills, trans-disciplinary goals, graduate attributes and employability skills. The varying and sometimes conflicting use of terms is usually due to them being more employment-related or more socially-gearred (Australian National Training Authority 2003). ‘Generic skills’ is the umbrella term for all those skills needed for forming and maintaining relationships over a variety of job and life situations (ANTA 2003). These may include basic literacy, numeracy and technology skills, and what are termed people skills, thinking skills, personal skills, business related skills and community skills (ANTA 2003).

One of the challenges encountered in this study, as already indicated, is the significance of the cultural and contextual interpretations of single words, phrases and ideas. In lay terms ‘being competent’ may simply indicate that one has the knowledge, skills and values for effective performance, but in a business context being considered ‘competent’ requires many discrete and measurable competencies; it is a “dynamic, situation based phenomenon” (Falender & Shafranske 2007, p. 233) and refers as equally to emergent, unsophisticated capacities as to a high level of mastery. Within the business literature “core competencies” and “capabilities” are common terms (Hamel & Prahalad 1989; Shippmann et al. 2000; Sparrow 1995). In the vocational educational environment in Australia, the term ‘competent’ is synonymous with success and the outcomes of many courses are based on predetermined competency levels. Higher education has kept its identity separate to vocational institutions and has more often used the terms skills or attributes which have been assessed against less prescriptive criteria (Barrie 2004). Intriguingly, the same words may have one connotation while studying, another when employed, and a different meaning when unemployed or retired.

A further complication is that different terms may be used precisely by some researchers, but are often used more loosely in Higher Education conversations (Hager, Holland & Beckett 2002). As mentioned previously “graduate qualities are described and defined differently in different universities and education systems” (Barrie 2006, p. 217) but the terms used overlap in meaning. Barrie (2006; 2009) argues that they are poorly-defined and unquestionably generic and the evidence suggests that at a university level they have to be; at a discipline level they should be contextualised and specific. But the more contextualised and specific they are, the more the likelihood that they become less transferable across disciplines, workplaces and cultures (Jones 2009).

## 2.0.2 Terms used in the workplace

Several words are used to encapsulate what employers value in new graduates. Allen, Ramaeckers and van der Velden (2003) and Allen and van der Velden (2005a), for example, use the term competences. Quite distinct from the educational use of competencies (particularly in VET) are Competency models which in an organisational setting have become a popular component of Human Resource (HR) strategy as a way to improve individual job performance and organisational effectiveness (Markus, Cooper-Thomas & Allpress 2005, p. 117), in other words, the ongoing employability skills. The critical distinction that Markus et al. explore relates to task performance and contextual performance, both of which contribute to job performance. Task performance is linked to the cognitive ability to apply technical knowledge (Borman et al. 2001 cited in Markus et al. 2005, p. 118) whereas contextual performance “includes behaviours and traits such as persistence and effort, volunteering, helping and cooperation, loyalty, policy and procedural compliance, endorsement and promotion of organisational objectives, initiative and self development” (Borman & Motowidlo 1997 cited in Markus et al. 2005, p. 118). Contextual performance is clearly not peripheral to graduate employment but requires a subtle understanding of the situation that can only be developed with experience. The authors’ concern is that many generic competency models “emphasise aspects of contextual rather than task performance” (Markus et al. 2005, p. 118). The link to this thesis is the question or expectation of where and how these competencies are acquired.

According to Johnston (2003) discipline-based definitions and perspectives limit the generalisability of research (discussed in Chapter Six) and Markus et al. (2005) hint at a similar concern when they state that there are educational, psychological, sociological and business approaches to defining a competency. The educational approach in the US analyses functional roles and assesses performance in terms of behavioural standards. In the UK a ‘competence’ is a specific, demonstrated level of mastery measured against expected work outcomes. McClelland and Boyatzis (1980, p. 369) have led the psychological approach with their definition of competencies as a “a generic body of knowledge, motives, traits, self images and social roles and skills that are causally related to superior or effective performance in the job”. Sociologists are interested in both the skills needed by the labour force of a



globalised organisation and what those skills mean for society and the general economy. There is also a Human Capital approach to business (Stevens 1994) which defines competencies in terms of an organisation's competitive advantage and holds that those people with skills that generate higher productivity have better employment prospects and/or earn higher wages. Each term and approach involves a number of normative behaviours which the particular organisation or institution wishes to promote and develop to enhance organisational effectiveness (Markus et al. 2005, p. 121) and therefore, from the perspective of this research, graduate effectiveness.

Consistent with the notion that Australian graduate attributes might be stated or regarded differently in a different context, is the context-driven assumption of their value and the nature of the knowledge involved (Burnapp 2009). Who values what and why needs to be determined. In Chapter Four it will be argued that organisational culture, ownership and size are relevant factors. Adler (1991) defines *value* as something intangible that is implicitly or explicitly desired and consciously or unconsciously held by an individual or group, which influences selection from other available options. This decidedly vague and unhelpful definition suggests that 'value' can be distinguished by an assessment of the attitudes and behaviour of individuals and groups and that possessing the "right" values – whatever they may be – can be one element of being "employable". The question then becomes not so much who is making the value judgement, as what is its impact and what are the 'right' values? The valuing of graduate attributes from the diverse perspectives within education and employability is murky.

## 2.1 Overview of graduate attribute research

In the early 1990s similar research into Graduate Attributes took place in the USA, in the UK and in Australia. The research has continued vigorously in these locations and suggests that the development and importance of graduate attributes vary within the particular context but for each of the aforementioned countries the idea of workplace readiness is pivotal.

The view of workplace readiness has informed the current research which considers the potential dissonance between expectations, possibilities and realities of a concept that is now being applied in a novel situation far removed from its social, political and economic origins. Thus, the challenge is to describe the extent to which graduate attributes framed within western settings have been adopted, localised or customised by employers in China. Another element to the research is determining what it is within the Chinese educational context that has shaped and influenced the norms and values of the various actors/stakeholders.

The task of this thesis is to achieve a meaningful, critical evaluation of the participants' responses which can be related to broader discussions surrounding the profile of a Bachelor of Business

graduate in China. To assist the process, where possible, Chinese employability skills are matched with one Australian university's set of graduate attributes.

The following section examines some of the relevant literature on graduate attributes and forms the framework for this thesis.

### 2.1.1 Australia

The historical context for the Australian development of Graduate Attributes has resulted in a definition that in key aspects is unique to Australia. Business round tables and government initiatives in the 1980s led to the second<sup>5</sup> Karmel Report (Karmel 1985), the Finn Review (Finn 1991) and Mayer Competencies (Mayer 1992) which resulted in the somewhat contentious move from a policy focus on the inputs required to produce education, to outcome-based educational policies. The counter argument was based on the erosion of the autonomy of education, academics and academic privilege. Supporting the move, Candy and Crebert (1991 pp. 577-578) suggested many differences between higher education and workplace requirements (Table 1); some of which could be reduced by a more workplace linked curriculum with real problems to solve in a timely professional manner.

**Table 1 Differences between higher education and workplace requirements**

Higher education typically produces a student who is:	The workplace, on the other hand, requires the graduate to be:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ curriculum driven</li> <li>✓ literate in a particular study discipline, but with a broad understanding of a wide research area</li> <li>✓ used to solving problems in a theoretically coherent framework</li> <li>✓ used to a classroom setting in which instructors instruct and learners learn</li> <li>✓ used to working towards pre-set educational objectives</li> <li>✓ used to being assessed, rewarded, or penalized by external evaluation</li> <li>✓ used to applying abstract intellectual processes to problem-solving</li> <li>✓ used to manipulating symbols</li> <li>✓ used to expressing thoughts, ideas, opinions, and solutions in written form</li> <li>✓ used to being assessed on written assignments where process is often as important as content</li> <li>✓ used to writing essays, reports, and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ competent at problem-based learning</li> <li>✓ literate across a broad range of disciplines, but with appropriate specialized knowledge/skills</li> <li>✓ used to solving problems in a practical, cost- and time-efficient way</li> <li>✓ used to an office or field setting in which there is no clear demarcation between instructor/trainer and learner</li> <li>✓ able to function with no pre-set educational objectives</li> <li>✓ used to applying self-critical and self-evaluative processes as well as receiving external approbation or disapproval</li> <li>✓ able to apply lateral or critical thinking processes to problem solving</li> <li>✓ able to use the tools available to the industry</li> <li>✓ used to expressing thoughts, ideas, opinions, and solutions orally</li> <li>✓ used to being assessed on oral</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> The first Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, *Schools in Australia*, or Karmel Report, was produced in 1973.

assignments, often over a relatively long period of time ✓ engaged in long-term research/ study projects ✓ conscious of self as a learner within a learning environment ✓ competitive on his or her own behalf, pursuing personal goals such as awards, accreditation, and prizes ✓ introverted and isolated in study habits ✓ jealous of personal research; and ✓ lacking in well developed interpersonal skills.	effectiveness and persuasiveness ✓ used to making oral submissions and written reports at short notice ✓ pursuing short-term profit-oriented goals ✓ not conscious of self as learner within the organization, but learning informally nonetheless ✓ competitive on behalf of the team or organization, pursuing company/group goals ✓ extroverted/ gregarious ✓ able to share the results of research with team members; and ✓ possessing highly developed interpersonal skills.
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The Dearing Report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education in the UK includes data from other countries. Of particular relevance are findings from surveys of the Australian Business/Higher Education Round Tables of 1992-1994, which produced a ranking of the 14 characteristics deemed desirable in university graduates by 26 of Australia's University Vice-Chancellors and 26 Chief Executives from a range of Australian businesses. The results, showing a high level of consistency between the views of the two groups, particularly for learning new skills and decision making, are presented in Table 2<sup>6</sup>. As suggested above, real problems are needed.

**Table 2 Rankings of characteristics by business executives and university Vice-Chancellors**

	Business		University	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Communication skills (eg writing, speaking)	1	4.26	5	4.06
Capacity to learn new skills and procedures	2	4.15	1=	4.25
Capacity to make decisions and solve problems	3	4.11	1=	4.25
Ability to apply knowledge to workplace	4	4.04	6	3.88
Theoretical knowledge in professional field	5	3.04	4	4.13
Capacity to work with minimum supervision	6	3.70	3	4.19
Capacity for cooperation and teamwork	7=	3.67	8=	3.63
Capacity to use computer technology	7=	3.67	8=	3.63
Understanding of business ethics	9	3.46	7	3.75
A broad background of general knowledge	10	3.35	10	3.44
Career motivation and ambition	11	3.26	11	3.36
General business knowledge	12	3.20	12	2.88
Specific work skills	13	3.11	13=	2.63
Asian language skills	14	2.91	13=	2.63

Source: Dearing 1997 Appendix 5: Table 1.4 Emphasis on characteristics of University graduates

The same business participants were then surveyed with regard to their rating of the relative importance of nine desirable future objectives of university education (Table 3). At that time

<sup>6</sup> The ratings are from 1 (unimportant) to 5 (very important).

thinking/decision making skills ranked first and on-the-job work experience last; not bizarre if on-the-job experience means working without genuine learning.

**Table 3 Ranking of university education objectives by business executives**

	Business
Learning thinking / decision making skills	1
Learning communications skills (eg writing, speaking)	2
Learning professional skills – theoretical studies	3
Developing standards of personal conduct	4
Learning professional skills – practical studies	5
Learning skills of cooperation and teamwork	6
Learning a broad range of general academic subjects	7
Learning about work and career choice	8
Receiving on-the-job work experience	9

Source: Dearing 1997 Appendix 5: Table 1.6 Objectives for University education

Both the HEC (Australia) report (1992) and the Karpin report (1995) called for more employable graduates for the new knowledge-based economy<sup>7</sup> and from then on economic benefits began to take precedence over the progressive, social justice, educational philosophy of the 1970s and 1980s (Welsh 1999). Welsh (1999) suggested political reasons for the move to Outcomes Based Education: that bureaucratic reporting is a disempowering form of control; that quality is more measurable; and that arguments for funding to assist disadvantaged groups would benefit. These reports led to policies which set the foundation that has since connected university curricula with the labour market, employers and professional bodies. Since then the experience of new graduates and employers in the Australian context has been shaped by the patterns of discourse and social interaction that have evolved around graduates being ‘workplace or profession ready’.

According to Barnett (1997) this new view of the university which embraced the postmodern idea of multiple ways of knowing (Gardner 1983), as well as social and global changes, was not entirely successful. To meld the new view of the university more closely with social and economic drivers, in 1998 graduate attributes were conceptualised in Australia (Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs 1998, p. 47) as a framework of the following generic attributes required of every graduate:

- The capacity for critical, conceptual and reflective thinking in all aspects of intellectual and practical activity;
- Technical competence and an understanding of the broad conceptual and theoretical elements of his or her fields of specialisation;

<sup>7</sup> See OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms: <http://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=6864>

- Intellectual openness and curiosity, and an appreciation of the interconnectedness, and areas of uncertainty, in current human knowledge;
- Effective communication skills in all domains (reading, writing, speaking and listening);
- Research, discovery, and information retrieval skills and a general capacity to use information;
- Multifaceted problem solving skills and the capacity for team work; and
- High ethical standards in personal and professional life, underpinned by a capacity for self-directed activity.

In 1995 Clanchy and Ballard identified inconsistencies in previous definitions and descriptions of generic skills, attributes and values and instead offered a set of sophisticated generic skills needed for research and communication and contextualised for different disciplines. Their research is still regularly cited, for example by Barrie (2006) who examines the various disciplinary conceptualisations of graduate attributes, at the same time recognising them as a questionable attempt to accommodate the multiple ways of knowing brought about partly by the Information Age (Barnett 2000). He identifies four levels of what graduate attributes mean to academics, which he labels as precursory, complementary, translation and enabling conceptions (Barrie 2006, p.223).

The Australian Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs (2000, p. ix) through AC Nielson Research Services, examined areas of employer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the skills of new graduates entering the labour market. They found a preference for graduates, even though they were perceived as having skill deficiencies, because they could be quickly trained in the organisation's procedures, were better educated, more likely to be future managers and could introduce new ideas into the organisation (p. ix). Generally the skill deficiencies most commonly cited by employers were: lack of communication skills, lack of interpersonal skills and lack of understanding of business practice. When ranked against the importance of skills to employers, the greatest shortfalls were: creativity and flair, oral business communications, and problem solving. Graduates from different fields of study were found to possess different skill sets and, relevant to this thesis, were the findings that "larger businesses consistently rated their new graduates more highly than smaller businesses", probably because of "the resources that they are able to put into recruitment and their ability to attract the best graduates" (p. ix).

In 2002 the Department of Education, Science and Training published *Employability skills for the future* which defines employability skills as "skills required not only to gain employment but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions" (DEST 2002b, p. 62). The report notes that employability skills may also be known as generic skills, capabilities or competencies. They note that while the Employability Skills

Framework of the report takes into account overseas trends, the content was constructed from interviews with Australian enterprises for the purpose of developing “a set of employability skills relevant to Australian industry for the future” (DEST 2002b, p. xx). In the framework the personal attributes which employers stress as “an integral feature of an employable person” (DEST 2002b, p. xiv) are “loyalty, commitment, honesty and integrity, enthusiasm, reliability, personal presentation, commonsense, positive self-esteem, sense of humour, balanced attitude to work and home life, ability to deal with pressure, motivation, and adaptability” (DEST 2002b, p. xv). They have a degree of innateness which requires reflection, self-analysis and effort, if modification is required and are listed as a “new and essential component”, followed by the skills of: communication, teamwork, problem solving, self-management, planning and organising, technology, lifelong learning, and initiative and enterprise (DEST 2002b, p. xv). The third component of the framework is termed ‘elements’ which reflect precise employer, workplace and employment-specific skill priorities. One of the report’s recommendations was that the implementation of the framework should involve all sectors of education and training; the implementation of the skills within the second component, which have become known as graduate attributes, was the component that Higher Education considered could be implemented.

Professional organisations are very interested in outcomes based education. For example, accounting professional bodies expect a balanced undergraduate curriculum, which includes students acquiring certain appropriate generic skills. Candy et al. (1994) and Birkett (1993) categorise “generic” as “cognitive” and “behavioural” skills. To synthesise the descriptions of behavioural skills outlined by the professional accounting bodies and the competency based standards framework for professional accountants (Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants & Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia 1996; Birkett 1993), Whitefield (2003) used “personal skills” and “interpersonal skills” and identified 12 personal and 10 interpersonal skills. Using these categories, she was then able “to differentiate the various ways in which behavioural skills are introduced into the curriculum” (Whitefield 2003, p. 68). Table 4 overlays Whitefield’s conclusions about how the skills are developed and ranked within the curriculum with her personal and interpersonal skill categorization. The personal skills needed to achieve an outcome ranked highest.

**Table 4 Overlay of explicit content with personal and interpersonal skills**

PERSONAL SKILLS	<i>Explicit</i>	Rank	INTERPERSONAL SKILLS	<i>Explicit</i>	Rank
think and behave ethically	√	15	listen effectively		=7
be flexible in new / different situations	√	14	present, discuss and defend views	√	=12
act strategically	√	20	transfer and receive knowledge		3
think and act independently	√	2	negotiate with people from different backgrounds and value systems	√	22
focused on outcomes	√	1	understand group dynamics	√	16

tolerate ambiguity	√	=12	collaborate with colleagues	√	11
think creatively and innovatively		6	communicate in the written format	√	4
handle challenges		5	be empathetic		21
handle stress		=18	communicate orally	√	10
handle conflict		=18	be motivated	√	=7
handle time pressure	√	9			
handle change		17			

Source: adapted from Whitefield 2003, p. 68.

Of further relevance, Whitefield (2003, p. 69) discovered that often the behavioural skill outcomes, more so than cognitive skills, are implicit (not stated within curriculum) rather than explicit (stated within curriculum). She suggested that this was due to their more abstract and complex nature, and used the example of ‘empathy’ as an interpersonal skill open to many interpretations. Moreover, her content analysis revealed a tension between what the accounting profession suggests are required personal and interpersonal skills and the curriculum that was designed to develop such skills: “The personal skills of ‘think creatively’, ‘handle challenge’, ‘handle conflict’, ‘handle change’ and the interpersonal skill of ‘be empathetic’ ... do not appear either implicitly or explicitly in the course documents” (Whitefield 2003, p. 77). A link to the current study is the following question, which may equally be asked of the Australian and Chinese contexts but be answered differently: Why have these skills been purposely or accidentally left out? Clearly there are many factors determining whether or not such skills can realistically or feasibly be developed in a formal way during a course. These and other questions, such as whether the skills are learned and developed in other formal or informal ways during the course, are revisited in Chapter Nine when perspectives of the graduating students and lecturers are discussed.

McKeown (2006) examined employment expectations and the process of finding employment. Table 5 below from McKeown (2006) summarises employers’ skill expectations from previous studies<sup>8</sup> compared to his own study results. The data gathered over seven years highlights many differences of opinion between employers, graduates and career counsellors; only communication is universal.

**Table 5 Alignment of employers’ required skills from previous studies with graduates and counsellors’ perspectives of required skills**

<b>PREVIOUS STUDIES: SKILLS REQUIRED</b>	<b>CURRENT STUDY: SKILLS REQUIRED ACCORDING TO:</b>	
	<b>Graduates</b>	<b>University career counsellors</b>
Motivation		Motivation
Initiative		Initiative
	Intelligence (good academic	Intelligence

<sup>8</sup> Namely, GDS 2002 & 2003; Bink 1996; Celuch & Slama 1999; Jameson & Holden 2000; Nicolson & Cushman 2000; Stewart & Knowles 1999

	results)	
Creativity	Creativity	
Organisational ability		Organisation
Teamwork		Team player
Communication ability	Communication skills	Excellent written/verbal communication
Interpersonal/social skills		
Problem Solving		
Leadership	Leadership	
	Dedication	
	Enthusiasm	Enthusiasm
	Flexibility	Flexibility
	Professionalism	
	Qualification	
	Confidence	
		Competence
		Maturity
		Reliability
		Commitment

Adapted from McKeown (2006, p. 10) Table 4 Employer Expectations

The note of caution, highlighted by Clanchy and Ballard (1995), Johnston (2003) and Barrie (2006), is that we do not know how these words have been used in the various research tools and how they have been understood by the various respondents. There is no mention of critical thinking.

In contrast to the definition used in this thesis, Precision Consultancy reporting on Graduate Employability Skills to the Australian Business, Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council, promoted employability skills as a subset of graduate attributes:

An analysis of graduate attributes from a significant number of universities shows that employability skills, as outlined in the Employability Skills Framework<sup>9</sup>, may reasonably be seen as a subset of graduate attributes. Therefore graduate attributes provide an appropriate starting point from which to further explore any future work on employability skills (2007, p. 2).

When employer opinions of graduates were canvassed as an indication of the success of a university, the resulting data indicated the value of a mix of Employability Skills and graduate attributes (See Table 6).

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<sup>9</sup> DEST 2002b



**Table 6 Top 10 selection criteria for recruiting graduates**

Key Selection Criteria	%
Interpersonal and Communication Skills (written and oral)	57.5%
Academic Qualifications	35.4%
Work Experience	27.6%
Leadership Skills	18.1%
Passion/Knowledge of Industry/Drive/Commitment/Attitude	15.7%
Teamwork Skills	15.7%
Critical Reasoning and Analytical Skills/Problem Solving/Lateral Thinking/Technical Skills	15.0%
Emotional Intelligence (including self-awareness, strength of character, confidence, motivation)	8.7%
Activities – includes both intra and extra curricular	7.9%
Cultural Alignment/Values Fit	7.9%

Source: Precision Consultancy 2007, p. 43 Table 7: Top 10 selection criteria for recruiting graduates

Graduate Careers Australia (GCA), an organisation fundamentally interested in maximising the alignment of graduate skills with employer needs, has built on this data. Its 2006 and 2007 research reports that interpersonal and communication skills are the most important selection criteria used in employing graduates (Graduate Careers Australia 2008a). In 2008 employers indicated that a poor attitude to work was the least desirable characteristic in a graduate (GCA 2008). In 2009, following a national project on Career Development Learning, a strong argument was made that “notions of graduate employability, employability skills, graduate attributes, and students’ experience of employability are important to the formulation of career development learning and work-integrated learning in higher education” (Smith et al. 2009, p. 18). This identifies graduate attributes as an important educational outcome for both immediate employment and longer term career development. From different social, political, economic and educational starting points, Australia and China have both had the employment notion of a “job for life”. For various reasons the notion is no longer the case in either country. Developing graduate attributes as well as local employability skills could assist personal career planning of graduates in both countries<sup>10</sup>.

In Australia, the employers, graduates and lecturers variously value a range of skills but graduate attributes and employability skills correspond. This is not surprising given that the teaching and learning curricula has been developed to reflect the culture and needs of the Australian workplace more than a global context, even though the global emphasis is stressed by Barrie (2004, p. 263):

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<sup>10</sup> The DEEWR/AEI “2007 Follow-up International Student Survey – Higher Education” reports favourably on the academic aspects of studying in Australia although employment expectations were not wholly met. It refers to graduate skills however it does not isolate the Chinese student data (Australian Education International 2008a).

Unlike many generic, key or employable skills statements in the United Kingdom, Australian statements of generic graduate attributes (Bowden et al., 2000; Hager et al., 2002) explicitly emphasize the relevance of these graduate outcomes to both the world of work (employability) and other aspects of life. In particular, the role of such qualities in equipping graduates as global citizens and effective members of modern day society who can act as ‘agents of social good’ has been emphasized in the Australian context.

The argument presented in this thesis is that there is considerably more alignment between the graduate attributes and employability skills in Australia than in China; and that the aim to equip graduates as global citizens is stated, but not well achieved. If it were, then the employment of local and overseas Chinese graduates in China may not be as grim as the headlines presented in Chapter One suggest. To be a global citizen also requires local employability skills and local cultural skills. The Australian graduate attributes can assist the graduate develop a process to identify and build local context-specific skills; most often the skills themselves will be too complex and nuanced for any university to teach them.

If China decides that there is to be a strong connection between education and employability mediated through curriculum then it would be imperative for transnational education programs to be contextualised accordingly. Effective contextualisation would require knowing the desired cultural attributes. As Marginson (2002) contends, education programs need to be current, relevant and responsive to market needs and this arguably applies equally to China as to Australia. To develop effective education programs, especially transnational programs, it is important to understand the environment or context that influences the teaching and learning process and hence graduate attributes. Marginson’s (2004) comment about declining government funding forcing income generation onto universities is also true for both countries, and reminds us that it is as important to acknowledge the similarities between the Chinese and Australian environments as it is to accept that there are some different drivers at work.

#### *2.1.1.2 Victoria University*

Victoria University (VU) is the researcher’s workplace. It is a multi disciplinary, dual sector university formed by the amalgamations of two tertiary institutes of technology and four Technical and Further Education colleges (TAFEs) in Melbourne, Australia, during the early to mid 1990s. Like other universities of similar background, these institutions have a long standing tradition of commitment to the career outcomes for their students. To market this perspective VU employs the motto “job ready, career ready and future ready” (2008d). As such, this type of university is likely to embrace graduate attributes (GAs) albeit with extensive debate.

At a policy level, Victoria University has committed all its higher education programs to include the development of contextualised generic skills. These were initially known as Core Graduate Attributes (CGAs) which at graduation all students should possess, as well as the specific knowledge and skills of their discipline. The policy stated “The purpose of developing core graduate attributes is threefold:

1. To provide a framework for *curricula* which develop students’ core skills, to be used for whatever purposes they may choose in the contexts of professional practice, scholarship and citizenship. The broad aim is to prepare students for lifelong learning in the four scholarships of discovery, application, integration and teaching.
2. To contribute to the positioning of the *University*. This is aimed at both attracting students to the University and making our students more attractive to employers.
3. To improve employment outcomes for *graduates*. Employment outcomes will be influenced by both the actual and the perceived “human capital” of graduates; therefore this purpose is closely linked to the other two” (Victoria University 2005a).

The five CGAs were amended in 2008 resulting in a sixth, which linked learning and career, and a renaming to Graduate Capabilities (GCs). Accordingly, the second version of the policy stated: “In addition to their technical and field of study-specific knowledge and skills, the VU graduate is able to:

1. problem solve in a range of settings;
2. locate, critically evaluate, manage and use written, numerical and electronic information;
3. communicate in a variety of contexts and modes;
4. work both autonomously and collaboratively;
5. work in an environmentally, socially and culturally responsible manner; and
6. manage learning and career development opportunities” (Victoria University 2008c).

When the first version of the above policy was being implemented, Victoria University commissioned its own research to inform new curriculum initiatives and directions for the Bachelor of Business. The program’s role as a “foundation for ongoing learning and professional and personal development” (Victoria University 2006a, p. 3), the effects of information, communications and electronic technology on work practices and the internationalisation of employment and education were considered.

The survey component of the VU research

sought to identify the skills, knowledge and professional attributes required of a future Business Graduate. It too addressed the integration of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) into Business degree programs, and investigated determinants of employability. Respondents were

asked to identify their occupation, method of employment and size of their business or firm.

The survey aimed to track divergent priorities and preferences in graduate attributes, technical knowledge and other characteristics (VU 2006, p. 6).

The research (Victoria University (VU) 2006) found a general consensus between all respondents with respect to questions of desirable personal attributes in graduates, as shown in Table 7 and Figure 1 below. The ranking is determined by the mean scores which were based on assigning 1 to “unimportant”, 2 to “moderately important”, 3 to “important”, 4 to “very important” and 5 to “essential”. Based on mean scores, motivation and enthusiasm, initiative and the ability to accept responsibility were the most important personal attributes of new business graduates. Creativity which ranked as least important for business respondents and alumni, ranked eighth with academic staff.

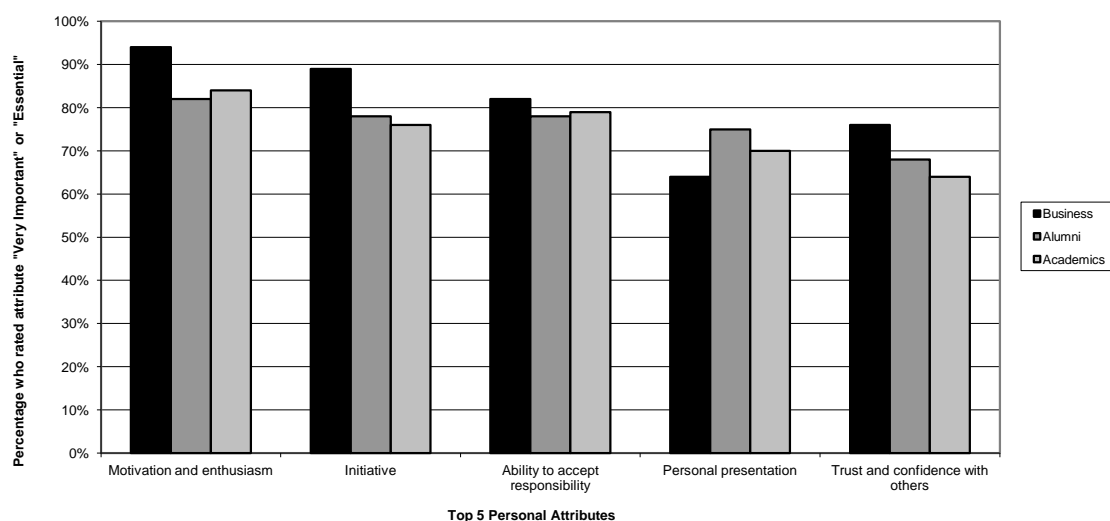
Instruction: ‘Thinking about the personal attributes required of a new Business Graduate please rate each attribute by level of importance’

**Table 7 Ranking of Personal Attributes**

	Business (mean score)	Alumni (mean score)	Academics (mean score)
Motivation and enthusiasm	1 (4.54)	1 (4.24)	1 (4.25)
Initiative	2 (4.30)	2 (4.14)	2 (4.09)
Ability to accept responsibility	3 (4.19)	3 (4.14)	3 (4.07)
Develops trust and confidence with others	4 (4.03)	5 (3.88)	5 (3.82)
Personal presentation	5 (3.81)	4 (4.09)	4 (3.99)
Interpersonal awareness	6 (3.76)	7 (3.74)	6 (3.76)
Self awareness and reflection	7 (3.63)	9 (3.69)	7 (3.69)
Maturity	8 (3.55)	6 (3.88)	9 (3.57)
Social awareness and sensitivity	9 (3.51)	10 (3.48)	10 (3.50)
Leadership qualities	10 (3.50)	8 (3.72)	12 (3.29)
Cultural awareness and sensitivity	11 (3.44)	11 (3.46)	11 (3.41)
Creativity	12 (3.36)	12 (3.44)	8 (3.57)

Source: VU 2006, p. 13 Table 1.

**Figure 1 Top 5 Personal Attributes**



Source: VU 2006, p. 14 Figure 7

Responses from the three groups to questions regarding professional skills differed more notably than the previous question regarding personal attributes. However, overall the responses were still very similar, with the lowest mean being 2.80 and the highest mean 4.33. Capacity to work in teams rated highly on the importance scale, as did oral communication skills and written communication skills whereas task requirements were rated as less important. The professional skills listed on the survey covered the first five of VU's Graduate Capabilities but not the career development capability. The results are presented in Table 8 and Figure 2 below.

Instruction: 'Thinking about the professional skills required of a new Business Graduate please rate each attribute by level of importance'.

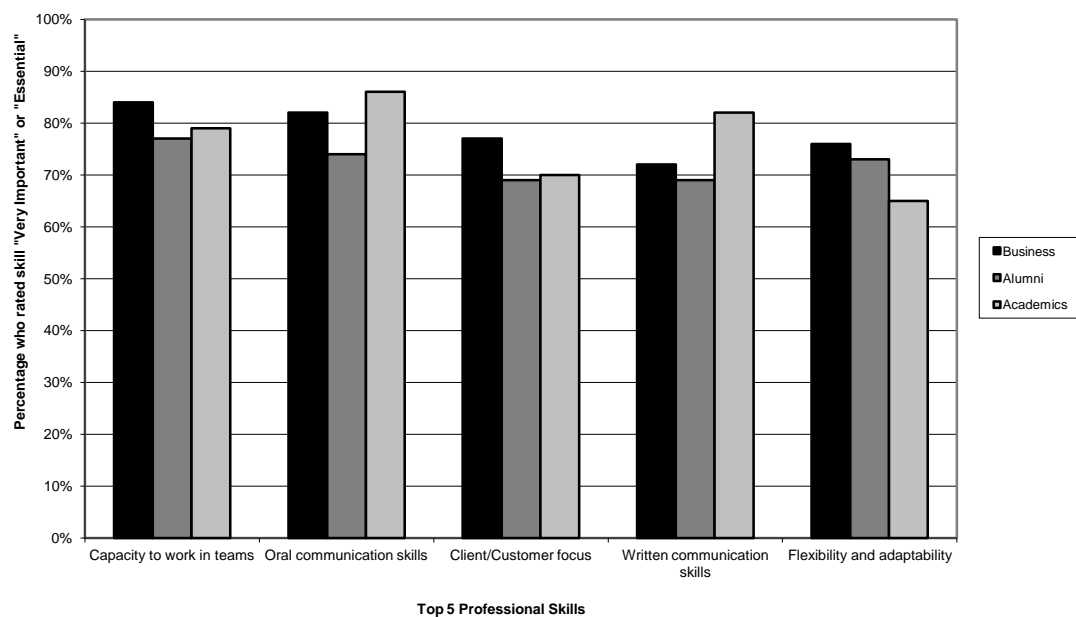
**Table 8 Ranking of Professional Skills**

	Business (mean score)	Alumni (mean score)	Academics (mean score)
Capacity to work in teams	1 (4.21)	2 (4.16)	4 (4.15)
Oral communication skills	2 (4.19)	1 (4.25)	1 (4.33)
Client/Customer focus	3 (4.17)	7 (3.94)	7 (3.93)
Written communication skills	4 (4.00)	5 (3.96)	2 (4.31)
Flexibility and adaptability	5 (3.99)	4 (3.98)	12 (3.77)
Problem solving skills	6 (3.95)	3 (4.02)	3 (4.18)
Capacity to work independently	7 (3.81)	6 (3.96)	5 (4.09)
Logical and orderly thinking	8 (3.73)	11 (3.73)	8 (3.91)
Decision making capabilities	9 (3.70)	9 (3.77)	10 (3.85)
Locate and evaluate information effectively	10 (3.65)	10 (3.74)	6 (4.02)
Capacity to handle pressure	11 (3.61)	8 (3.90)	15 (3.55)

Quick comprehension of task/position requirements	12 (3.55)	13 (3.66)	14 (3.58)
Understanding of business practices	13 (3.46)	12 (3.68)	9 (3.87)
Data analysis skills	14 (3.39)	14 (3.38)	13 (3.63)
Report writing skills	15 (3.3)	15 (3.34)	11 (3.84)
Position specific technical knowledge	16 (2.92)	16 (3.15)	16 (3.34)
Using mathematical ideas and techniques	17 (2.85)	17 (2.80)	17 (2.93)

Source: VU 2006, p16 Table 2

**Figure 2 Top 5 Professional Skills**



Source: VU 2006, p. 16 Figure 8

Business, academic and alumni responses differed along the lines of important knowledge areas. While all rated computer literacy highest, and business ethics and business communication highly, the average means for the academic knowledge areas surveyed showed the widest spread in this section (lowest 2.59, highest 4.33). Results are presented in Table 9 and Figure 3 below.

Instruction: 'Thinking about the academic knowledge required of a new Business Graduate, please rate each knowledge area by level of importance'

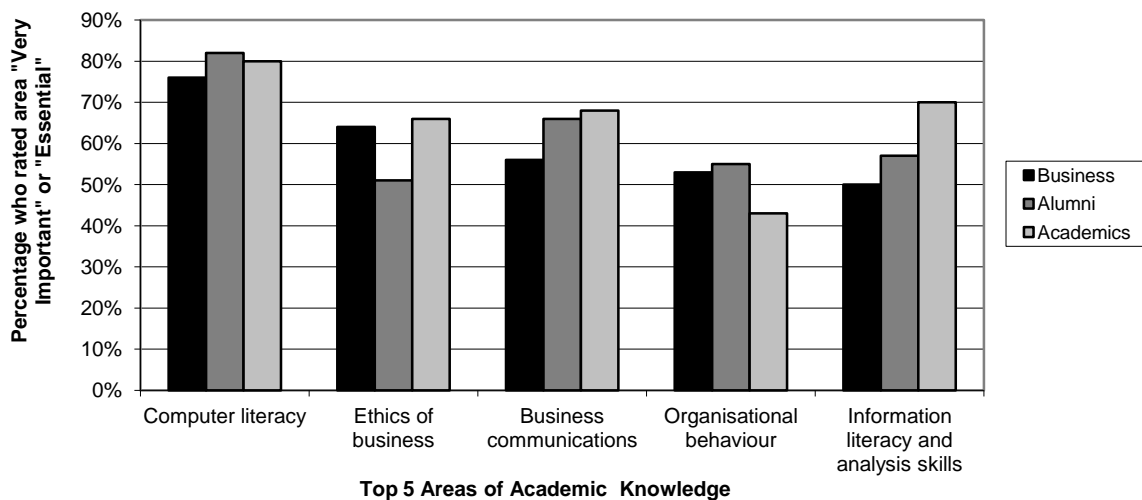
**Table 9 Ranking of Areas of Academic Knowledge**

	Business (mean score)	Alumni (mean score)	Academics (mean score)
Computer Literacy	1 (4.15)	1 (4.26)	1 (4.33)

Ethics of business	2 (3.86)	5 (3.53)	4 (3.85)
Business communications	3 (3.61)	2 (3.82)	3 (3.88)
Organisational behaviour	4 (3.54)	3 (3.61)	7 (3.3)
Project management skills	5 (3.54)		
Information literacy and analysis skills	6 (3.53)	4 (3.57)	2 (3.98)
Financial literacy	7 (3.51)	7 (3.3)	6 (3.34)
Strategic planning and implementation skills	8 (3.36)		5 (3.46)
Innovation and entrepreneurial skills	9 (3.21)	6 (3.37)	9 (3.18)
Accounting principles	10 (3.17)	11 (3)	10 (3.08)
Marketing principles	11 (3.11)	8 (3.26)	12 (3)
Business and commercial law	12 (3.05)	10 (3.05)	11 (3.06)
Economic principles	13 (2.97)	12 (2.85)	13 (2.99)
International business environment	14 (2.79)	9 (3.12)	8 (3.18)
Statistical methods	15 (2.72)	13 (2.61)	14 (2.9)
Mathematical methods	16 (2.64)	14 (2.59)	15 (2.75)

Source: VU 2006, p. 19 Table 3

Figure 3 Top 5 Areas of Academic Knowledge



Source: VU 2006, p. 19 Figure 9

These findings have significantly impacted on certain subjects at a faculty level within the Bachelor of Business at Victoria University. Based on the review's recommendations that "the embedding of professional skills and attribute development in the course be adopted as a priority" (VU 2006, p. 2), a new compulsory subject has been introduced at each year level. Called Professional Development (1, 2 and 3), it addresses personal attributes, professional skills and academic knowledge through a more multidisciplinary, problem-based pedagogy. This is receiving positive feedback from most students, but has not yet been analysed by the stakeholder groups in the above research.

### 2.1.2 United Kingdom

Since the 1980s research in the UK on graduate attributes and skills has been continuous, extensive and government funded. Early general indicators of skill based on training time, learning time and qualifications were developed for the Social Change and Economic Life Initiative in 1986. The Employment in Britain survey in 1992 used measures of these indicators to examine broad skill trends in the workplace, and the 1997 Skills Survey extended this work. Including the same questions in subsequent surveys has shown changes in the broad skill levels used in the workplace (Felstead et al. 1999). However, Drummond et al. (1998) and later Barrie (2006, 2009) argue that besides some effective individual achievements, systemically the implementation of graduate attributes in curricula has been limited. Appendix B reviews the research by Dearing (1997); by Felstead, Gallie, Green, Unwin and colleagues; by Yorke, Knight, Harvey and their teams; by Brennan et al. and lately by Hawkrigge (2005), which examines connections between students, education, employers, the economy and politics.

A recent UK study which demonstrated foresight and student-centredness arose from a general awareness of the impact of globalisation, that future employment opportunities are unknown and that employability is more than a precise skill set. With globalisation, governments have lost some control over workforce needs and one way for potential employees to promote themselves is to demonstrate their ever evolving skills as relevant and up-to-date:

Thus, in the UK, by advocating the explicit integration of certain skills into the curriculum at all educational levels, the Dearing Report (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education 1997) provided a means through which skills development could be promoted. However, in the past and, too often still, employability has been equated with skills acquisition only... employability is more than the acquisition of skills, but involves learning and development acquired through a range of experiences including higher level academic learning and reflection, and preferably including work experience or work related learning. Through this combination of learning experiences the graduate has the opportunity to acquire the skills of analysis and synthesis and the ability to up-date their knowledge and find information. They also acquire meta-cognitive skills such as time management, self-organisation, problem solving and in addition the skills of career management (Stapleford & Leggott 2008, p. 4).

Building on work by Shah, Pell and Brooke (2004) who found that the quality of the educational experience was seldom informed by students' or graduates' perspectives on skill requirements or the teaching of skills, Stapleford and Leggott (2008) explored student perceptions of both their skills development and employers' requirements (Table 10) to suggest ways in which student awareness of



these issues could be enhanced through changes in the curriculum. As the results showed a disconnect with studies about employers' requirements, the outcome was a decision "to improve the development of skills within the degree by auditing and evaluating the current employability element, incorporating employability more coherently and comprehensively into the course curriculum and making all skills more explicit in the curriculum and course documentation" (2008, p. 8).

**Table 10 Student perceptions of their own skills development and future usefulness**

Skill	% of students expressing an awareness of the skills developed by Year 4 (Honours year)	% of students who perceived the usefulness of the skills for their future employability
Time Management	65	69
Awareness of own strengths and weaknesses	62	62
Language learning strategies	57	50
Organisation and Planning	42	54
Critical thinking and analysis	27	46
Self-confidence	39	39
Taking responsibility for own development	65	50
Decision-making	39	46
Problem-solving	34	42

Source: Stapleford & Leggott 2008, p.6 – Table 1 Student perceptions of their own skills development by the final year of their degree and the usefulness of these skills for their future employability.

In summary, the idea that certain identifiable generic skills had grown in importance in the workplace resulted in attempts to improve the acquisition of specific generic skills in the education system. A policy focus on 'key skills' ('communication skills', the 'application of number', 'information technology skills', 'problem-solving skills', 'working with others', and 'improving one's own learning and performance') led to embedding them in both the school and the British university curriculum. As noted in 2.0.1 Barrie (2006; 2009) contends that because they are poorly defined and generic, despite some excellent initiatives and funding (more so in the UK than in Australia), successful systemic and systematic implementation of graduate attributes in curricula is limited. The next wave of research linked their actual usage in the workplace, job analysis, and their social impact on the British economy and is moving on from the critical point of this thesis which is the immediate employment skill requirements for graduates.

### 2.1.3 USA

The Secretary's Commissions on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) of 1991 and 1992 were early studies in the USA that reviewed national workplace requirements of secondary education. The

reports used the language of “job analysis”, “competencies”, “foundation skills” and “personal qualities” to ensure that students were prepared to be responsible employees, team players and have a passion for continuous learning (SCANS 1991, p. 4). Significantly the reports were invitations to employers to talk to educators. As with the Australian and UK research, the focus was to identify the competencies beyond the technical expertise that “represent the attributes that today’s high performance employer seeks in tomorrow’s employee” (SCANS 1991, p. ix). Early implementation occurred within liberal arts colleges (Green & Seymour 1991).

Of the studies which are different to those in the UK and Australia, Rogers and Mentkowski (2004) progress beyond recent graduates to look at alumna performance in work, family and civic roles, five years after graduation. Rather than *skills* or *capabilities*, Rogers and Mentkowski use the term *abilities* which they define as a multidimensional, complex combination of “skills, motivations, self perceptions, attitudes, values, knowledge and behaviours” (2004, p. 348). The subjects were all female alumna from Alverno College which since 1973 has required graduates to show a prescribed level of disciplinary or professional effectiveness in ‘communication, analysis, problem-solving, valuing in decision-making, social interaction, developing a global perspective, effective citizenship and aesthetic engagement’ (2004, p. 355). The results, based on what Rogers and Mentkowski call the Behavioral Event Interview, confirm “that a wide range of intellectual, prosocial, independent, and team-oriented abilities are related to effective alumna performance” (2004, p. 347). From a teaching perspective, Faculty staff considered that the curriculum had prepared alumna through “the breadth of the framework used for constructing action, the flexible use of disciplinary knowledge, a skilled collaboration with others, and a mature capacity for self assessment of one’s performance and abilities” (2004, p. 347); very neatly, “nine of the 12 faculty members spontaneously and explicitly named one or more of the eight curriculum abilities” (p. 362).

#### **2.1.4 Studies involving Chinese participants outside mainland China**

In the United States Hafer and Hoth (1981) and Holland and Herron (1982) strengthened a growing interest in selection criteria as a systematic tool for evaluating job applicants. Both studies required managers and students to rank 26 job selection attributes and found differences between the employer and student responses. Building on this research, one of the few studies that compares the importance of different job selection criteria to individuals from different cultures was carried out by Peppas, Peppas and Jin (1999). They were particularly interested in the situation where the interviewer (employer) and interviewee (graduate) were from different cultures. Peppas (2002) later demonstrated that there has been ongoing consistency in the importance accorded to selection attributes by US employers. It was noted that a consistent view of selection attributes had not been established for Chinese employers in China or elsewhere. In 2005 Peppas and Yu extended the 1999 research and sampled Chinese university students in the US on the importance of certain job candidate

attributes. The findings were compared with data from employers (Table 11). Identifying the importance given to 26 job selection attributes by Chinese university students and comparing their importance ratings to those of both Chinese and USA employers, revealed some of the issues of matching Chinese applicant qualifications to job requirements and new criteria such as loyalty.

It was anticipated that the findings of Peppas and Yu (2005) would be useful to students, lecturers and recruitment and selection personnel by providing the criteria perceived as important to Chinese business students in the hiring process. Peppas et al.'s research greatly informed the development of this thesis. Table 14 on page 47-48 attempts to align the top ten Chinese employer rankings as contributors to Chinese employability skills, with VU Graduate Capabilities.

**Table 11 Comparison of job selection attributes**

Selection Criteria Rankings			
Criteria	Chinese student ranking	Chinese employer ranking	US employer ranking
Loyalty	1	5	6.5
Self Confidence	2	14	6.5
Oral Communication	3	9	4
Enthusiasm	4	12	1
Punctuality	5	6	9
Mannerisms	6	16	17
Community involvement	7	18	19
Initiative	8.5	2	2
Motivation	8.5	1	3
Leadership	10	4	10
Knowledge of Company	11	3	18
Disposition	12	8	5
Assertiveness	13	23	13.5
Work Experience	14	7	16
Written communication	15	10	15
Maturity	16	11	8
Extraversion	17	17	11.5
Willingness to relocate	18	22	21
School reputation	19	19	20
Hobbies	20	24	22
Appearance	21	20	13.5
Grades in school	22	15	11.5
Age	23	13	23
Marital status	24	25	24
Sex	25	21	25
School age children	26	26	26

Source: Table 2 Peppas and Yu 2005, p. 85.

In 2002 to recast education as a process of personal transformation, the qualifications framework proposed for Hong Kong mapped the outcomes for each qualification level using generic descriptors:

knowledge and intellectual skills, covering the analytical and evaluation skills used to solve problems, and the ability to reflect on practice and plan and manage learning; processes, covering the application of judgment, communication skills and the ability to work with others interactively; the degree of application, autonomy and accountability assumed while practicing those skills; and skill areas of Communication, IT and Numeracy (Kennedy 2004, p. 608).

These descriptors were similar to those of Australia, the UK and the USA but the implementation process aimed to avoid issues experienced by those countries. For example, the Hong Kong educators accepted the discourse limitations of key skills and that some skills might be more lifelong than others in an environment of economic change which means there can still be a gap between skills possessed and skills required (Avis 2002 cited in Kennedy 2004, p. 608). They also realised it was a notion incompatible with having a core set of stable skills and that a course cannot deliver exact mastery or such work-ready employees (Wolf 2003 cited in Kennedy 2004, p. 608).

The qualifications framework in Hong Kong inspired a range of research directions. Project Yi Jin was formulated as an alternative route to lifelong education (Wong & Yeung 2004). Lifelong education in this context means the formal learning that takes place during one's education, or the formal and informal learning that takes place during one's life, or the specific learning through continuing education programs (Wong & Yeung 2004). In contrast, the authors define graduate skills as the skills acquired within or simultaneously with one's degree for enhancing employment potential over and above discipline knowledge.

The project did not comment on the relevance of university courses as perceived by employers, but it suggested other skills and intelligences that should be valued by students such as communication skills, study skills, career skills and daily practical skills. It was reported that employers regarded Project Yi Jin graduates favourably, as completion of their course showed perseverance and motivation. For students who gained employment after successfully completing Project Yi Jin, it reinforced the importance of a qualification as the starting point for academic and career advancement.

According to Kennedy (2004, p. 595) lifelong learning discourse has been adopted in Hong Kong because of "rising youth unemployment, to expand post-secondary education without increasing public spending, and to justify the introduction of a qualifications framework that, as a policy instrument, will give the government greater control over post-compulsory education and training". This is a practical example of local conditions leading to the operationalisation of a theoretical concept. Pre-1997 with Hong Kong under British rule, it was unclear whether education policy reform in Hong Kong reflected serious consultation or continued the status quo of the colonial

government (Morris & Scott 2003); it was considered as reactive to social and political needs. Post-1997 Morris and Scott (2003) believe there has been some genuine implementation of education policy that is proactive to educational and business needs.

In Hong Kong there is a fund that subsidizes adults completing continuing education courses that develop generic skills such as “design, problem solving, languages, team building, change management and inter- and intra-personal skills for the workplace ... in order to contribute to the economic development of Hong Kong” (Kennedy 2004, p. 605). In other words, there is recognition of the financial importance of these skills, especially for those students who are not moving from high school into degree courses. But even with the need for Project Jin, there is no suggestion that universities also include these skills. In fact there is little changing traditional university content-focussed curriculum: “Hong Kong universities have been frequently criticized for not being sufficiently well-attuned to the Hong Kong economy” (Kennedy 2004, p. 606). At the same time training schemes for jobless young people “were criticized for merely keeping them off the streets and not providing the sort of training that would improve their future job prospects” (Kennedy 2004, p. 607).

### **2.1.5 Studies involving Chinese participants within China**

The above studies have examined Chinese students studying away from mainland China. The educational programs undertaken reflect the curriculum in terms of content and graduate attributes in the country where they studied. The skills acquired would be a mix of the less confronting and those important to immediate educational success. Studying away from home and being influenced by a western milieu might highlight some of their own cultural values. This has been illustrated by the U curve and W curve of cultural clash and cultural re-integration (Best, Hajzler & Henderson 2007; Burnapp 2006). From the perspective of Chinese employers, the more employable graduates on their return to China are those who operate bilingually and bi-culturally (Society for Human Resource Management 2007), compared with those whose Chinese identity was subsumed within the host culture (Committee of 100 2006). If these graduates know which combination of skills is required and can adapt appropriately, they should be able to move between cultures with ease thus enhancing their employability both within a Chinese and western environment.

The cultural aspect of employability has recently become a topic of interest and research on mainland China. Huang et al (2004, p. 4), as part of their case study approach for examining cultural orientations, analyse a survey conducted in 2003-2004 by China’s Research Center for Economic Transition at Beijing University of Technology. They assert that the results (Table 12) demonstrated the shifting of cultural behaviours in the young professional population of China.

**Table 12 Shifting cultural behaviours in young professional Chinese**

China Business Environment		
Cultural Characteristic	Past	Present
Han Xu (implicit communication: verbal & non verbal)	Indirect	Direct
Qian Xu (humility)	Humility	Pride
Ting Hua (listening-centeredness)	Listening	Interactive
	Passive	
Ke Qi (politeness)	Politeness	Politeness
	Unconditional	Conditional
Guanxi (personal connection, relationship)	Nepotism	Qualifications
	Cannot terminate	Can terminate

The five characteristics of Chinese communications queried by their survey are unique<sup>11</sup> and raise the significant question of how they are acquired. Are they part of the formal or informal curriculum, implicitly or explicitly? This is particularly relevant if the higher education curricula has not changed significantly to cater for workplace characteristics and results in the type of media headlines as presented in Chapter One. Table 14 on page 47-48 is an attempt to align these with VU's Graduate Capabilities.

From another perspective, Feng (2002) looked at the educational specialisations of graduates to see if they met market needs and concluded that market demand forecasting was inadequate. The study also surveyed graduates and found: "the disparity between college students' personal strengths and positions and their expectations with regard to employment are a cognitive factor that causes a great waste of graduate talent" (Feng 2002, p. 32). On the other hand Messmer (2003) identified desirable qualities in job candidates while Chang and Cohen (2003) discussed the financial importance of hiring someone who fits the company profile and culture.

Lan, Ma, Cao and Zhang (2008) claim that the accounting profession in China changed after joining the World Trade Organisation in 2001 and again with the introduction of Chinese accounting standards similar to the International Accounting Standards. They also acknowledge that the goal is for a market economy with Chinese characteristics, but do not mention Chinese communication characteristics. Building on earlier research which asserts that values drive behaviour (Lan et al 2008), they investigated 56 values of the Chinese accounting profession and Chinese accounting students, and whether any differences in priorities were discernable (Table 13). As these students would soon enter the workforce their perceptions and worldviews may help to understand their future decisions and what a market economy with Chinese characteristics might look like. They found that Health, Family Security, Honouring of Parents and Elders, and Self-Respect were the top four values for both accounting practitioners and students, but were prioritised differently. Furthermore they suggest that educators in China could include in their curricula activities that "will evoke in the

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix C for descriptions of these cultural characteristics

accounting students and employees, values that are conducive to more ethical behaviour, a wider social awareness and concern” (Lan et al 2008, p.19). Table 14 on page 47-48 is an attempt to align the top quartile values, as contributors to Chinese employability skills, with VU Graduate Capabilities.

**Table 13 Top and Lowest Semi-Quartile Values of Students versus Practitioners**

<b>Students (N = 126)</b>			<b>Practitioners (N = 87)</b>		
<b>Values</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Rank</b>
<b>Top quartile</b>					
Healthy	5.87	1	Healthy	5.93	1
Family Security	5.56	2	Family Security	5.37	2
Honoring of Parents & Elders	5.26	3	Self-Respect	5.30	3
Self-Respect	5.19	4	Honoring of Parents & Elders	5.13	4
Capable	5.10	5	Pleasure	4.71	5
Pleasure	4.87	6	Capable	4.70	6
Social Recognition	4.87	6	National Security	4.67	7
<b>Lowest quartile</b>					
Authority	2.94	50	Respect For Tradition	2.54	50
Respect For Tradition	2.64	51	Authority	2.45	51
Social Power	2.40	52	Social Power	2.23	52
Devout	2.09	53	Detachment	2.23	52
An Exciting Life	2.03	54	An Exciting Life	2.02	54
Detachment	1.97	55	Devout	1.71	55
Accepting My Portion in Life	0.79	56	Accepting My Portion in Life	1.68	56

Source: Lan et al 2008, pp. 20-21.

Several other studies have informed the current study. Tung (1981) noted technical competence on the job, social skills, ability to deal with government, labour and other environmental issues and family matters as the critical factors for success in foreign places. The first two of these have been included in the current survey, while the third is represented as problem solving and critical thinking. The issue of family matters was considered less relevant to the current study. Lau and Pang (2000, p. 135) focus on person/job fit. Their research suggests that an important determinant of success in identifying and capturing employment opportunities is an accurate assessment of graduates’ own strengths and career interests, as this allows them to make a more accurate analysis of the person/job fit. Job analysis methods for measuring skills have led to quantitative data on a range of skills obtained from personal estimates of personal competences and of the extent to which these skills are used in workplaces (Allen & van der Velden 2001). Such studies are new in China, and the developed survey tool could collect such perceptions.

Finally, Li and Pak (2008) discuss creativity as an example of a skill that was needed in any modern competitive business. In China, however, developing creativity requires overcoming decades of being

in a planned economy where such skills as risk taking, critical thinking, innovation and creativity have not always been classroom behaviours (Li and Pak 2008) and also not rewarded in the workplace.

A reading of Gu's seminal paper (2006) on e-learning reveals an acknowledgement of the need to develop a student as a "whole person"; that is, someone possessing the following ten qualities which Gu considered to be essential for a student to be a successful e-learner:

- (1) able to learn independently as well as collaboratively;
- (2) capable of self-discipline, self-management and self-monitoring;
- (3) capable of seeking resources and resource selection;
- (4) capable of resolving the conflict between study and other commitments;
- (5) capable of taking the initiative;
- (6) capable of applying interpersonal skills;
- (7) capable of seeking help;
- (8) confident and persevering;
- (9) capable of developing personal learning styles and strategies; and
- (10) able to lead and control.

VU's Graduate Capabilities, at least in their functional intent, can be mapped closely to these 10 qualities, as shown in Table 14. Qualities needed for successful e-learning are not exclusive to e-learning and not exactly the same as those needed for face to face instruction but technology is part of most workplaces and the ability to use technology is a commonly required employability skill.

**Table 14 A possible alignment of findings from four Chinese studies with VU's Graduate Capabilities**

VU's Graduate Capabilities	The "10 Qualities"	Chinese Cultural characteristics	Chinese Selection criteria (top 10 as ranked by Chinese employers)	Within Chinese accounting profession
Is an effective problem solver in a range of settings	(4) capable of resolving the conflict between study and other commitments (5) capable of taking the initiative (8) confident and persevering;		Work experience	Capable
critically evaluate, manage and use written, numerical and electronic information	(3) capable of seeking resources and resource selection			
communicate in a variety of contexts and modes	(6) capable of applying interpersonal skills (8) confident and persevering	Hanxu Qianxu Tinghua Keki	Oral communication; Written communication	Honouring parents & Elders
work both autonomously and collaboratively	(1) able to learn independently as well as collaboratively	Guanxi	Initiative; Leadership; Loyalty;	Self – respect; social



	(2) capable of self-discipline, self -management and self-monitoring (4) capable of resolving the conflict between study and other commitments (7) capable of seeking help (8) confident and persevering (9) capable of developing personal learning styles and strategies (10) able to lead and control		Disposition	recognition
work in an environmentally, socially and culturally responsible manner	(6) capable of applying interpersonal skills		Knowledge of company; Punctuality	Healthy; Family security; National security
manage learning and career development opportunities	(2) capable of self-discipline, self -management and self-monitoring			
			Motivation	Pleasure

Whilst verified only by two linguists, the awkward, partially subjective, alignments and non-alignments in Table 14 above indicate different functions and relationships in China between curriculum outcomes and workplace needs. The employability skills of initiative, motivation and communication are mentioned by Chinese and Australian employers but how and when they are used and demonstrated differ. The notion of collaborative activities is another example of significant difference between Australia and China. In Australia collaborative activities at university provide a range of skills that prepare the graduate for the Australian workplaces where a common feature is collaboration. In VU a significant proportion of one's final unit of study grade is derived from the same grade which would have been given to all group participants; in other words, in most group assignments all members of the group receive the same grade. In Chinese universities collaboration in some activities perpetuates the Confucian idea of individuals contributing to a greater societal good; student performance in groups however is rarely part of the assessment structure and in the highly competitive educational system in China the focus is not societal but individual. Clearly there is value in participation, but it is too subjective to be accurately reflected in the grade each student receives. In Chinese workplaces the intention behind a collaborative decision is diffusion of individual responsibility; a collaboratively reached solution is also more likely to promote harmony and assist in the preservation of face for those whom will be impacted by the decision. In both Australian and Chinese workplace contexts one of the skills of collaboration is knowing how and when to use which skills.

## 2.2 Learning in the workplace

All universities are keen to market their graduates as highly employable. The graduate attributes are meant to be an holistic approach that allow employers, graduates and academics to communicate with each other. Mostly the attributes are achieved through campus based curricula, but another way to achieve this end is through effective Learning in the Workplace (LIW) or Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programs. There are many advantages to activities that link formal learning with first-hand workplace learning. The experiences encourage an alternative, realistic perspective to the theory and through reflection (Schon 1987) promote a deeper understanding of both the workplace practices and the theoretical perspective (Brown 2008). Students develop an understanding of workplace culture and the learning from such programs that should assist in the transition to work and enhance employability (Fallows & Steven 2000). For further discussion see Appendix D.

## 2.3 Internationalisation and graduate attributes: 'as a business'

Agelasto and Adamson believe that universities have moved from learning academies to education enterprises (1998, p. 405). If so, there are many aspects to the business of education: all, including graduate attributes, moderated by socio-political contexts and differing views on and degrees of privatisation and marketisation. Globally, as the costs of education have increased, educational planning has become more overt and externally influenced by the funding bodies. According to Cohn and Geske (1990) the main economic theories influencing educational planning have included: a manpower requirements model, social demand, rate of return, or, aspects of all three. Whichever of the theories a country adopts, an increase in tertiary enrolments may not equate to an increase in state funding.

In countries such as the UK, education and industry have long been intertwined to greater or lesser degrees of sophistication. Sometimes the driver for this has been government, sometimes business, sometimes the Higher Education institutions collectively or alone. According to Charles and Howells (1992 cited in Charles & Conway 2001, pp. 17-8) education as a saleable business can be grouped into four broad categories: Research services, application of knowledge, people-based mobility and exchange schemes, and the formation of new companies.

Selling education to local and international markets has become a business, a new, fifth category. The business drivers such as wanting to keep costs down, increase productivity, adapt to or develop new markets, products and services, have become the language of the management teams of educational institutions. In turn, education programs that emphasise the skills of teamwork, problem solving, flexibility, decision making, reflection and effective communication, skills perceived to underpin such business drivers, should offer graduates an advantage in both the local and global labour markets

(Hager, Holland & Beckett 2002). These skills have, as discussed, been embedded in the education courses and pedagogy in Australia, the UK and the USA, as has in some Australian universities an attribute about developing international perspectives. Now some liberal education courses with a broad multidisciplinary skill focus have been funded at a limited number of prestigious Chinese universities (Levin 2010). According to Levin, the driver in China is to have a number of world class, globally competitive universities that genuinely foster the independence and creativity needed for the innovations that sustain long term economic growth.

Both curriculum and strategic educational alliances need to be guided by the adage: ‘act global, think local’. Teekens (2003, p. 109), while predominantly concerned with European educational issues around globalization, identifies local and global issues that are valid for an internationalised education:

Globalisation will make education more technological and thus more system oriented and less student and teacher centred. At the same time, there is an increased demand for real-life skills in students and teachers to deal with differences in our universities and beyond. Global learning means focusing on global issues and the learning needs associated with them, while at the same time functioning within a local context— at home. The extent to which this issue is addressed, as ambivalent as it may seem, is a test of the quality and adequacy of teaching and learning in our multicultural societies and in higher education in particular. It challenges the notion of national education and what this means for all facets of traditional university life within individual countries and for individual teachers and learners.

This is an interesting perspective that seems to contradict the move to student-centred education due to a tension between global learning and the local context. In fact a system oriented model of teaching and learning may be a cost efficient way of tailoring education; students would select the discrete modules that apply to them or which broaden their outlook. It remains to be seen whether the model becomes part of the pedagogy of a Chinese multidisciplinary curriculum.

Chan (2006, p. vi) concludes that “university internationalisation is complex, multifaceted and value-laden”; that the nature of each university will determine where internationalisation fits in terms of objectives, strategies and practice; that what starts out as serendipity may become institutionalised; and that internationalisation can have positive outcomes. She cites the International Association of Universities’ (IAU) survey (2003) for the top reasons for internationalisation (in descending order of priority). In essence they expand on Charles and Howells’ four categories (1992 cited in Charles & Conway 2001, pp. 17-8):

1. Mobility and exchanges for students and teachers

2. Teaching and research collaboration
3. Academic standards and quality
4. Research projects
5. Cooperation and development assistance
6. Curriculum development
7. International and intercultural understanding
8. Promotion and profile of institution
9. Diversify source of faculty and students
10. Regional issues and integration
11. International student recruitment
12. Diversify income generation (Chan 2006, p. 35).

For all reasons except maybe diversifying income sources, an understanding of a university's purpose, goals and drivers such as graduate skills, attributes or capabilities can add value and indeed may assist in establishing a university's competitiveness.

Chan refers to de Wit's (2002, p.136 cited in Chan 2006, p. 55) "Internationalisation Cycle, Modified Version" which is a complex cycle of analysis, awareness, commitment, planning, operationalising, implementing, reviewing, reinforcing and integrating, to ensure that international activities are embedded and explicit. De Wit's cycle is valid and strategies may be developed but "the meanings and interpretations each attaches to the core ideas and concepts may vary dramatically" (Dimmock 2002, p. 32). Dimmock (2002) argues for more cross-cultural research in education as a way of ensuring that western theories are not inappropriately transferred to non-western contexts.

Unfortunately the good practice of having strategy, infrastructure and budget aligned, is rare. In the IAU survey (2003, p. 11):

63 percent of its 176 member institutions ... indicated that they had "a policy/strategy in place" for internationalisation. Among the 63 percent, about two-thirds indicated that the strategy was "institution wide and that there was an office to oversee internationalisation," but only half of them had a budget or a framework to monitor the implementation process.

At a local level Australia Education International (AEI) and DEST have been trying to overcome barriers to trade in education and training with China by working with organisations and processes such as the World Trade Organisation and General Agreement on Trade in Services. However, as some "barriers in the education services sector can be perceived as 'legitimate' government policy, quality control or consumer protection mechanisms, it is unrealistic to expect the elimination of all barriers for the sector" (DEST 2005b, p. 10). Cooper (2004) listed Australia's weaknesses as: its Westernised view of the world, lack of cultural understanding and sensitivity, and the enigma of the

Chinese learner. These aspects negatively impact on Australia's international education business dealings and reinforce the value of VU's fifth Graduate Capability (see p. 35).

## 2.4 Internationalisation of curriculum

Whilst Cooper's identified weaknesses were referring to people and institutions, they are also reasons why internationalising the curriculum is important. Internationalising the curriculum and its twin, intercultural learning (of staff and students), should take into consideration not only the learning objectives, content and assessment but also forms and styles of delivery. The main driver for this body of work is the fact that educational institutions are now teaching a diverse group of students with diverse destinations after graduation. It is an activity that may happen as a result of artful and deliberate teaching and learning, that is based on knowing the student body, but often needs the impetus of policy and the expertise of curriculum developers. Building on Knight's (2004) definition that internationalisation requires the deliberate addition of an intercultural perspective into all aspects of post-secondary education, internationalisation of curriculum (IoC) according to Rizvi (2007) should creatively place the local within the global and transcend cultural boundaries by developing skills of inquiry and critical reflection. For Caruana (2008) IoC should, and is necessary to, promote global citizenship, explore diversity and develop inclusive teaching and learning practices for the benefit of all students but particularly those who may never travel. Chang (2008), like Caruana (2008), and later Arkoudis et al (2010), argues that IoC should be used as a driver for increasing positive interactions between domestic and international students.

Leask (2008a) identifies the challenges to IoC as personal due to educators needing to critically reflect on cultural assumptions, professional due to changing teaching practices, and institutional due to regulatory processes and the global role of universities. The essential characteristics of transnational teachers are grouped by Leask (2008b) under the themes of discipline, cultural and procedural knowledge and teaching skills. At VU internationalising the curriculum has been driven by the diversity of the cultural backgrounds of the teaching staff on- and offshore, the students on- and offshore and the realisation that after graduation students need to be prepared for diverse destinations.

As a transnational curriculum catering for diverse educational contexts and diverse graduation destinations, the task of internationalising is culturally complex. Ziguras (2008) argues that a globalised curriculum might be too removed from the real world and that it may present as universal, ideas that are local. Hence one argument of this thesis, for a curriculum constructed from graduate attributes that act as a framework from which specific skills can be locally prioritised and contextualised; this is appropriate as local situations are more likely to be a familiar starting point to engage the undergraduate learner. This model for an internationalised curriculum requires educators to be informed about the local employment culture, to have the capacity to incorporate local practices

into their teaching and the expertise to foster ongoing learning skills so that graduates can succeed in less known situations (Leask 2008b). VU's strategies have included an annual teaching and learning conference in China which brings together Melbourne-based and China-based educators to share experiences and explore possibilities. Funding collaborative teaching and learning research projects has been another strategy. Both strategies support the idea that internationalising the curriculum requires constant transformation which Leask (2008a) argues should be for the benefit of all students.

As an example of internationalising a TNE curriculum, the stated direction for VU's course development that more subjects, onshore and offshore, should be offered using a mix of face to face and online delivery is a new approach in China requiring different skills of both the lecturers and students. This mix of deliveries and unfamiliar skill set have been barriers to VU's attempts to more successfully offering subjects in mixed mode in China (VU 2005). To take this line of argument further, mixed mode delivery required curriculum changes which prioritised and promoted VU's graduate attributes in a particular way. For some this resulted in a rigidity which was too hard to implement offshore. Internationalising the curriculum has to allow for localising and contextualising as stages to becoming a global citizen so that the different meanings and relevance in each of the Australian and Chinese contexts can be critically reflected upon, first at a micro level than more globally.

## 2.5 Summary

In 1999 Luo Qiangliang and Liang Chengdu reported on the importance of knowledge and skills beyond those gained through a Chinese qualification. They predicted a decline in credentialism<sup>12</sup> and thought they could already see the incipient signs of new job selection criteria (Luo & Liang 1999). While this might be the case, there has been very little research into what skills are being developed, how and whether they meet the Chinese workplace requirements, and the existence of regional and industry differences. Indeed, Peppas (2002) showed that US employers have been consistent over time with regard to the importance of candidate attributes and argued that the situation is unknown for Chinese employers.

The key to successfully incorporating graduate attributes and the more tangible employability skills in the Australian curriculum delivered in China is first and foremost a lack of an agreed understanding of them both among Australian lecturers and their Chinese counterparts partly because they are not fully embedded in the most efficient and effective manner, as suggested by Barrie's (2006) four levels. In

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<sup>12</sup> Employers raising their qualification requirements for jobs even though the nature of the jobs remains unchanged (Felstead et al. 2002, p. 9).

fact they are seen variously and confusingly as too general, too much of an ‘add on’, too restrictive of what education should be. On the other hand, Yorke and Harvey (2005, p. 43) concluded that in the UK the need for a specialised first degree is declining as long as the intellectual attributes are developed. At an institutional level, it is possible to argue that VU has more “naturally” adopted the practical attributes due to the historical positioning of its courses as vocationally orientated. But this same starting point may not be the case with VU’s partner universities in China, and more specifically, the partner institution at which the research for this thesis took place. Indeed, the drivers of the Chinese education system suggest that the needs have been different. This will be explored further in Chapter Three.

There are many lists of employers’ desired and definite requirements, arising from twenty years of research, which reinforce the ubiquitous debate over the value of ‘attributes’. If, as Stapleford and Leggott (2008, p. 3) indicate, “employers’ requirements in the United Kingdom (UK) seem to be broadly consistent with those of other countries, both within and outside of Europe” and graduate attributes are also broadly consistent, why are curricula also not consistent? Partly the answer lies within the complexities of internationalising the curriculum. Whilst the merit of internationalising the curriculum is unquestioned the reasons for doing so, who should do it and how it is achieved are highly questioned.

The simple answer regarding curriculum development for China is that research into employer needs, discourse surrounding graduate attributes and interactions between employers, lecturers and graduating students are all framed from a significantly different perspective that warrants investigation. Stapleford and Leggott (2008) also recognise that graduate employment is changing, that the graduate labour market is unpredictable, that there are new types of companies, different types of work, with markets being globalised in a volatile economic climate. Some of these issues will be addressed in Chapter Four which focuses on the Chinese business environment and Chapter Seven which analyses the Chinese education environment. Several of the studies mentioned in this chapter, such as Peppas and Yu (2002; 2005) and Whitefield (2003), are critical to the current research and their research methods will be examined in Chapter Six.

## Chapter Three Education in China

### 3.0 Introduction

Being educated in imperial China meant access to political power, influence and social mobility. Then in the 1940s, with the establishment of the People's Republic of China, education became "a key factor in the revitalization and reconstruction of national identity and economy" (Turner & Acker 2002, p. 21). During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) being educated and/or being an educator was not advantageous and later, with centralised job allocation, being educated and/or an educator did not mean you could choose who, what or where you worked or taught. With China's "Open Door" approach to the external world commencing in 1978, education policy became a means of supporting economic growth and reform while still maintaining political order (Hayhoe 1989). At a personal level, further internal political changes in relation to residency permits and job opportunities mean geographical mobility and social mobility have now become drivers for education, perhaps more than the functional educational aspects of simply working for the benefit of the state (Liu & Volkoff 2007).

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the tertiary educational environment in China at a macro-level as context for the micro-level analysis which is presented in Chapter Seven through the case of one partnership between the researcher's university and a university in north-eastern China. The case demonstrates some forms of internationalisation and contextualises the research question: *What qualities and skills does a Chinese graduate with an Australian Bachelor of Business need for employment in China?* This should assist in determining whether western or other 'graduate attributes' can be inferred from Chinese curriculum and teaching practices, the various forms internationalisation can take and the perceived, sometimes embedded, requirements of the curricula taught in Australia and China that ensure students will meet the requirements of employees in China.

Unlike the range of critical writings on education available in Australia, information about education policy and government objectives for tertiary education in China is difficult to obtain in Chinese let alone in English. The most accessible sources were websites and newspapers. From one perspective the approach lacks a level of criticism and triangulation of data sources (Wiersma 2000). However as argued in Chapter One, newspapers in China maintain legitimacy as a source of information because of their government approved status and their role as the government's voice. Another area of difference is that along with the large number of critical voices in Australia there is an equally large array of interpretations of the Australian government's education policy and objectives; documents reflecting these differences in China are rare.

This chapter presents an overview of the drivers of the different tertiary sectors in China and then focuses on the higher education curriculum in China and its links to employment.



### 3.1 Chinese education directions

As noted in the first chapter, 1985 was a significant year for re-addressing the role and importance of higher education in China at the institutional level. Then, in 1993, the CCP Central Committee and the State Council announced a new focus for educational reform on matters not considered in 1985 and linked tertiary recruitment more closely to employment opportunities that would enhance China's global position:

Global competition is fundamentally competition in science, technology and national quality. To this extent, a nation can win the competition in the 21<sup>st</sup> century only if she equips her education system to meet all developmental needs of that century. China has to strategize her education now to confront those challenges (Agelasto & Adamson 1998, p. 53).

For higher education, reforms which previously had “been tempered by policies at the macro level, that take into consideration social and organisational infrastructure more so than pedagogical practice” (Turner & Acker 2002, p. 14), moved to address the rationale and structure of higher education, enrolment, pedagogy, financing and employment. For example different admission schemes and funding conditions were permitted; job assignment became job arrangement and was limited to priority state and national projects, although sometimes incentives were offered to take up difficult, remote or rural jobs (CCP Central Committee & The State Council 1993; State Education Commission 1993). In 1994 the Outline for the Reform and Development of Chinese Education stated that 40 institutions had begun a project of ‘merging tracks’ in the systems of student enrolment and graduate employment; 400 institutions would do so in 1996. By 1997 many higher educational institutions had a system of fees for school attendance and a process to assist self-determined job selection (Gan 1997).

However, the reforms and the general modernisation drive led to certain issues, as identified by Lewin, Xu, Little and Zheng (1994), and also touched on in the analysis of perceptions in the popular press in Chapter One. Namely, the slow development of vocational skills and a mismatch between jobs and tertiary specializations suggests that higher education and the marketplace were operating independently and hence HEIs were not keeping pace with modernisation. Alternatively, when there is collaboration, the tendency is to develop curriculum that is too job specific (Yang & Lin 2010). Higher education in China as in Australia (but unlike the US) is predominantly centrally funded (Cheng 1998, p. 17) which, even with declining funding<sup>13</sup>, can provide opportunities for seeing the “big picture” connections between government departments and disciplines; this happens only

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13 3.4 per cent of GDP in 2002 (UNDP 2005)

occasionally in Australia and seldom in China. Bureaucratic decisions and issues of curriculum change within a highly centralised and structured educational administration are frequent. Yet, given the enormity and range of changes that China's modernisation program requires and the government's assumption that education enables employment, improved manpower planning could help education meet the needs of the economy.

In 1994 Lewin et al.'s assertion that students lack independent thinking and study skills had some validity given the imperial examination system (Simon 2000) and Dore's (1997) 'diploma disease theory'. This theory explains the desire for qualifications in preference to knowledge in response to employment competition and a backwash focus on end of subject exam results. Final exam results are the selection criteria for ever higher levels of education and because employers have more and more graduates at a given level from which to choose, the need for a higher qualification is constantly being driven higher (Dore 1997). While this is also evident in western societies, Simon (2000, p. 17) argues "the effects of the 'diploma disease' will remain prominent in Chinese education as long as the links between education and social privilege remain". The effects have fluctuated depending on how political regimes in China have linked academic achievements and career prospects, but the effects of a competitive system are evident today. Interestingly, Simon (2000, p. 29) argues that the learning strategy of memorization arose partly from traditional thought valuing a systematic approach to learning, partly because weaker students - who may also be time-poor and less privileged - may be able to learn the correct answers even if unable to understand the theory, and partly because teacher and school success is measured by their students' success in the next exam.

Lewin et al.'s final point about an overly centralised and rigid educational administration is both a legacy and consequence of the political situation. To expand on this point, the PRC had followed the Soviet centralised model of using education as "an instrument to prepare manpower for the nation" (Cheng 1998, p. 18). This involved "a nationwide unified system of student admission, unified curriculum structure, unified system of programmes, syllabi and textbooks and a unified system of job assignment for graduates" (Cheng 1998, p. 18). Changing such a system even slightly requires more than just mandates. From the theoretical perspective of structure and agency, the Chinese Ministry of Education has been a very dominant structure and the teaching staff very disempowered agents. In contrast recently the most forceful agents have been graduates, in particular those wanting to avail themselves of the opportunities of the market economy. Manpower planning through job assignment has been replaced, as long as the state does not have a designated "area of need", by the practice of 'two-way choice' (Agelasto 1998; Yin & White 1994). In this process educational institutions bring employers and graduates together to start the recruitment and selection process. While the selection process potentially identifies curriculum development opportunities the process is often administered

by non-teaching staff and, as with most big bureaucratic organizations, information and change tend to move slowly.

In short, much educational decision-making has now been decentralised and the authority structure has shifted from political bureaucrats to the experts. While there is not necessarily greater efficiency or equity, there is improved delivery, accountability and autonomy, and at some levels, market influences are apparent (Liu & Volkoff 2007; Shah, Thompson & Zou 2004).

There is however an ongoing tussle between specialisation, which the Chinese version of the Soviet education model encouraged, and the current education trend towards interdisciplinary teaching which aims to give graduates a broad knowledge base and range of skills that will enable them to change jobs according to the needs of the market economy. This situation is complicated by the motivation levels of the students. A specialised subject can be intriguing and seen as customised to the student and workplace needs or it might be an outdated specialty, far too theoretical or not assisting the graduate in a work environment typified by frequent job and career shifts. In response to the pragmatists, Liu pleads for a more humanitarian and less utilitarian approach to teaching and learning. He, like Marginson (2010) and Hassan (2009) in Australia, argues that universities have an important social role to:

influence society with their excellent cultural and spiritual elements and lead society with their constructive and creative ideas rather than submit to the pressure imposed by the productive system of society. If the imperative to strengthen humanitarianism in education is constantly weakened, universities and colleges will inevitably be reduced to vocational training centres which are aimed at giving people a livelihood... Higher education should stick to its own humanitarian, pioneering nature with foresight, purity and independence and guard against its fast secularization, pragmatization and commercialization (Liu 1998, p. 138).

Dickson (2009, p. 182) highlights the knowledge generation function of universities through teaching and research and development outcomes, but argues that at an international level opportunities are not being fully maximised:

It follows that governments will need to focus on finding ways to encourage and incentivise universities to understand the importance of this at the national level. It will also challenge many universities to get much better at creating the links to industry that will allow R&D to feed quickly into products and innovation. Although this will challenge many traditional university models it also offers a golden opportunity for some universities to place themselves “at the heart of” economic development and the emerging knowledge economy.

While Dickson is not referring specifically to China, the synergies between his ideas and the ambitious 2004 goals of the Ministry of Education in China<sup>14</sup> indicate that China is positioning itself in this corner of the global arena. Meanwhile the competition for places at Chinese universities remains tough:

The IDP report notes that China expanded its domestic tertiary education places from nearly six million in 1999 to more than 18 million in 2004 – a three-fold rise – and is adding 2.5 million places each year. That represents a staggering compound annual growth rate of 25% yet applications for university places from prospective students continue to outstrip supply (Maslen 2007, p. 1).

As will be pointed out later, meeting demand has been a driver for transnational education.

### 3.1.1 Legal context

In 1995 the PRC's first Education Law regulated increased financial control and independence for creating regionally appropriate programs (Mok & Chan 1998, p. 289), with accompanying shifts in funding. Everyone has equal access and the same rights as with the nine year compulsory education for all children and the state pays. However as higher education is not compulsory, it is not regarded as a public good, so the individual beneficiaries or at least their families must pay.

Then in 1998 amendments were made to the Higher Education Law. Article 16 (2) of the Higher Education Law of the People's Republic of China, adopted at the 4th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the 9th National People's Congress on 29 August 1998 and ratified by Order No.7 of the President of the People's Republic of China on the same date states:

undergraduate education should enable students to systematically master the basic theory and basic knowledge necessary for the respective discipline and specialty, master the basic skills, techniques and related know-how necessary for the respective specialty and acquire initial capability for the practical work and research work of the respective specialty (Ministry of Education PRC n.d., p. 1).

This suggests a difference between education and training with mention of the capabilities to do practical work but, as noted elsewhere, there is in reality no differentiation between educational and training capabilities. This is due to limited research identifying what these capabilities are and to the push for higher education being at a more overarching level, to raise the general level of education of the Chinese people.

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<sup>14</sup> See Chapter One page 3.

During a period of rapid development (1995-2004), two major regulations the “Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Chinese-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools” and “The Implementation on Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Chinese-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools” were ratified by the State Council of the People’s Republic of China on 1 March 2003 and on 1 July 2004 (Adams & Song 2009). These clearly linked Sino-foreign education cooperation to China’s economic modernisation.

At the level of career and life skills, according to Adams and Song (2009), HE in China has only recently considered changes to encourage the development of life-long learning. However, they note that “the first challenge for HEIs is about how to develop a quality HE system” and “in terms of cooperatively running schools, the Chinese Government has endeavoured to enhance its regulations in order to improve the quality of HE in China” (Adams & Song 2009, p. 197). A quality auditing process is underway in China for transnational education generally. But Dickson (2009, p.181) believes “Regulatory and quality assurance frameworks have not kept pace with the speed of change in transnational education”, thus possibilities for transnational education have not yet been optimized in China.

### **3.2 Education reform, employment objectives and graduate outcomes**

To build a thorough understanding of the educational drivers and particularly connections with businesses in China, a number of websites were analysed, often with varying degrees of success. For example, a search of the Chinese Ministry of Education’s English website contains interesting information but, as with the excerpt below on structural reforms for higher education, is undated:

Chinese economic system used to be very highly centralized. To adapt to that, the former higher education system was also centralized, with education provided by the central and local governments respectively and directly under their administration. The disadvantages of this system were that the state undertook too many responsibilities and the schools lacked the flexibility and autonomy to provide education according to the needs of the society, with central departments and local governments providing education separately, the structure of education was irrational and segmented. There were too many single disciplinary HEIs and professional HEIs. With the establishment of disciplines over-lapped, the efficiency of some HEIs fell very low which in return hampered the improvement of education quality.

Therefore, the structural reform of higher education has become a key for other higher education reforms. The reforms of higher education consist of five parts: reforms of education provision, management, investment, recruitment and job-placement, and the inner-institute management, among which management reform is of most importance and difficulty. The overall objectives of higher education reform are to smooth the relationship among

government, society and HEIs, setting up and perfecting a new system in which the state is responsible for the overall planning and macro management while the HEIs follow the laws and enjoy the autonomy to provide education according to needs of the society (MoE PRC, n.d., p.1).

The excerpt describes the complexity of the reform and the focus on new structures and management to enable greater synergies between education and contemporary social needs. If using such synergies becomes standard practice then eventually employability skills and graduate attributes might become commonly understood ideas and intertwined, at least within Chinese vocational colleges (Yang & Lin 2010). The underlying assumption is that this is a positive outcome but the evidence is inconclusive.

The China Education and Research Network website ([http://www.edu.cn/education\\_1393/](http://www.edu.cn/education_1393/)) has numerous articles from 2001 to 2006 but lacks current material. For example: “MOE: Survey of the Educational Reform and Development in China” of 23 December 2004 refers to the greater student numbers in Chinese higher education and the required structural reforms underway:

by the end of 2002, there were 2003 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with a total enrolment of 16,000,000 students. With a net 15% enrolment rate at HEIs, a mass higher education had been established in China. Guided by the principle of ‘joint establishment, adjustment, cooperation and mergence’ and after more than 8-years’ effort, the management system of higher education and the deployment of educational resources were optimized; 597 HEIs were merged into 267. Among the 367 HEIs, which were previously under the direct administration of central ministries, administration of about 250 had shifted to the provincial governments encouraging local initiatives in developing higher education and enhancing the close relationship between HEIs and regional economic and social development. The outcome should be improved quality of teaching, education provision and research capacity by HEIs. The commitment of HEIs to the national economic and social development has therefore been expanded (China Education and Resource Network 2004, p. 1).

A lengthy report on China’s employment situation and policies and their affect on educational programs is available on a site connected to China Daily, but the discussion of training and skill development is from 2004 and does not relate to higher education in China:

Strengthening pre-employment training, China has fully adopted the workforce preparation system, and widely established and implemented the system of training for new workforce before employment... In 2003, some 1.26 million urban junior and senior middle school graduates who were unable to enter schools for further studies received such training (Xinhua 2004, p. 1).

Ambitiously, Wen Jiabao, Premier of the PRC State Council referred to some quality and equity drivers for education in his *Report on the Work of the Government 2008*:

we must ensure that all students receive a well-rounded education, and promote educational reforms and innovations. We will deepen the reform of curricula, methods of instruction, the systems of examination and enrollment, and the system for evaluating educational quality, and lighten the study load of primary and secondary school students. Two, we must improve the quality of teachers, especially in rural areas, and improve and implement the system of wages, allowances and subsidies for teachers. Three, we must increase investment in education...(Wen Jiabao 2008, p. 1).

Individual university websites tend to be descriptive and vague about policy directions and specific learning outcomes. The Beijing Jiaotong University (BJU) site keenly promotes employment outcomes:

Advanced teaching methods, modernized teaching environment, fair strength in running the school, all this contribute to the rising fame of our university which attracts numerous excellent senior high school students and young people to get enrolled in. As you sow, you will gain, the employment rate of our graduates keeps high over 94%, and in recent years, our students have also achieved excellent results in competitions and matches either in Beijing or nationwide (Beijing Jiaotong University 2007, p. 1).

On the Liaoning University (LU) website, the English Guide for Study at LU mentions nothing about skills or attributes that a LU graduate will have. The general introduction is aspirational with local and international goals, does not explain how the new century differs to the previous or the employment rate of graduates:

Confronted with opportunities and challenges of the new century, Liaoning University is accelerating its reform, innovation and development. Now with the strengthening of disciplines as its propelling force, teaching and research as its dominant attention, the building up of teaching and managing staff as its foundation, the improvement of campus environment as its supporting condition, reform as its motive power, the intensification of administration work as its means of achieving its goal, and last but not least, strengthening Party-building and ideological and political work as its bulwark, the University will double its effort to build itself into a teaching-and-research type university at a fairly high academic level and with certain international influence in five to ten years (Liaoning University 2006, p. 1).

In 3.6 I explore further the immediate employment issues of a Chinese higher education graduate, given that there is little interaction between professional bodies and business organizations in the teaching and learning focus of the HEIs. Striving to increase the general education levels of the Chinese population has dominated reform. However, simultaneously, the following forms of tertiary education in China have attempted to fill current or anticipated gaps.

### **3.2.1 Higher adult education**

In parallel with the formal higher education system which was incapable of producing graduates (“educated manpower”) to meet the demand of the Modernizations, Open Door policies or, sufficient “specialised personnel to improve the forces of production” (CCP Central Committee 1985, p. 193), a higher adult education (HAE) system was adopted. An additional training scheme for adult education which updated knowledge, skills and morals, whether or not one already had a qualification, was deemed critical for economic development and social progress (Xiao 1998, p. 202). One strategy to promote HAE courses was linked to job recruiting and promotion. State policy required the personnel system to consider training and education needed to satisfy job requirements (Cheng, Jin & Gu 1999; State Education Commission 1987, p. 7). But lack of funding and inadequately trained staff meant that the real life learning needs of HAE students and their respective workplaces were often not met (Knowles 1980; McCormick 1984). Nevertheless, the HAE is regarded as playing an important role in developing the human resources required to meet changing demand / supply and job skill gaps.

### **3.2.2 Vocational universities**

Since their establishment in 1980, vocational universities attended by fee-paying students have responded to the needs of specialized labour market shortages and addressed the contradictions of insufficient financial resources, enormous application numbers for higher education institutions and a great shortage of well-educated manpower. At a time when Chinese higher education graduates were still guaranteed a state-assigned job, the Chinese Society of Higher Education reported that most graduates from these vocational universities had no difficulties in finding jobs and demand for these graduates was higher than supply (Yin & White 1994). Vocational education is now regarded as a way of reinvigorating China through Human Resource development and has led to an accreditation system of academic credits transfer between TAFE and higher education (Zhao, Liu & Volkoff 2009; Zhou & Zhu 2007). Yang and Lin (2010) regard the move from social institution to purely employment training organisation as a negative neo-liberal effect of globalisation, driven by a need for legitimacy and funding.



### 3.2.3 Private educational services

The re-emergence of private educational services has created more educational opportunities and is another sign of the move from state monopoly to a mixed economy. Public and private institutions of learning co-existed during the dynasties, then in the 1950s with the Soviet model adopted by the PRC, private institutions diminished and quickly disappeared. Since 1978 private higher education has been again permitted (Mok & Chan 1998, p. 284) in various forms. As they are not subsidised by the state there is freedom to design practical curricula that respond to student and market needs. It is acknowledged that these universities, with less investment than public universities, run efficient, socially beneficial operations, provide a reasonable education, and can adapt to social and economic forces (Mok & Chan 1998, p. 285).

HAEs, vocational universities and private educational services are examples of curriculum being developed for quite specific employment related purposes. The positive employment outcomes of these courses are evidence of the value to both graduates and employers. HEIs in China may become increasingly employment skill focused or they may adopt a focus on generic graduate attributes which suit the broader Chinese educational context and drivers.

### 3.3 “Going out” and “bringing in”

While the British opened up the Chinese education system to missionary schools at the beginning of the 19th century, and there have been many colonising influences since, to a foreigner it is still a fundamentally inward-looking Confucian education system (Turner & Acker 2002, p. 14). This is a superficial view of Chinese tertiary education which particularly since 1978 has adopted international intellectual approaches and curricula. A ‘modern-yet-Confucian’ educational philosophy has existed which has stressed symbiosis over assimilation, particularly with regard to “domestic and international perspectives on education and learning” (Turner & Acker 2002, p. 15) but the impact of this philosophy has lessened over time. While Turner and Acker (2002) argue that education in China in modern times has resulted in intellectual, social and political convergence and Shi (2004) sees the Confucian learning culture moving to a modern individualism, Curran (2005) believes that mass acceptance of western-style education has been limited because it polarizes rather than integrates society. Curran further argues that traditional education appeared to provide Chinese people with the opportunity to improve their position, still a paramount goal for many. Schrock (2010, p. 1) on the other hand asserts that the benefits have been mostly one way and that more Western students need to study in China:

hundreds of thousands of travelled [Chinese] students have allowed modern China to understand the Western world, culture and political systems. In comparison, the numbers of

foreign students who study in China continues to be a trickle (only 13,000 US students went to China in 2007-08). This has resulted in an outside world that does not understand China.

It is anticipated that the new 2010-2020 reforms in China will bring more autonomy and less hierarchical administration for universities, remove some of the rigid and archaic Soviet-style systems and move to a model of education closer to that of the west (Sharma 2010). The MOE asserts that the reforms will support further international collaboration and enhance the quality of existing ones to produce “Chinese graduates with international perspectives and competitiveness” but with “a balance of regional and global approaches” (Sharma 2010, p. 1). Sharma (2010, p. 1) notes that “the much-criticised university admissions system will be revamped” with the introduction of “interviews and other educational criteria”, that China currently has 188 transnational education partnerships and in 2009 US\$2.5 billion of China’s research funding came from abroad (Sharma 2010, p. 1).

My thesis points to some subtle but continuing differences between Western-style, Socratic education, which regards learning as a lifelong process (Barker 1997), and Chinese-style, sometimes Confucian-based education which considers learning “as a one-time process for the young as a collective group” (Kingston & Forland 2008, p. 2). Notwithstanding, there is potential for educational practices in a modernizing China to be more flexible. Indeed Adams and Song (2009, p. 201) reinforce the idea of modifying and adopting practices to support the changing culture and economy:

In the real practice, Chinese education institutions must pay more attention to learn and borrow advanced education concepts, education patterns, teaching contents and methods and managerial experience, and make these applicable to the process of self-reform and self-development. These need to be managed so that they are consistent with needs of academic reconstruction at national, local and regional levels).

Transnational and international education between Australia and China has grown since China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 and signed an agreement on education which confirmed that the Chinese Government controls the evaluation and management of international collaborations (National Center for Education Development Research 2002). The agreement demonstrated a belief that:

- economic change from joining WTO requires innovation from education; and
- foreign education sources can help China to improve its educational capability (Cen 2002).

The agreement promotes:

- distance education in other member countries;

- studying in other member countries;
- establishment of courses independently or collaboratively in other member countries; and
- exchange of experts between member countries (Li et al. 2001).

The global trade in education has been advanced by UNESCO and OECD in documents such as the Outlines of Quality Assurance of Transnational HE 2004 and events such as the 2005 Global Forum of Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Qualification Recognition (Adams & Song 2009). In China the massification of HE since 1978 has increased the human resource and knowledge base needed for the government's social and economic goals. The next stage of China's educational reform is to establish more modern mechanisms and quality-oriented policies.

Having home-grown graduates in the subject areas that support national economic priorities is a significant driver to developing a high quality education. It is also one way for China to address knowledge transfer and the accompanying funding that has been more outbound than inbound (Dickson 2009). Dickson (2009, p. 180) suggests several government incentives to entice the foreign study diaspora home, for example by rewarding universities who turn research and R&D into new products, by supporting returning graduates moving into relevant employment, and by offering mechanisms and funding for starting new businesses.

### 3.4 Education as an international business

At one end of the spectrum an organisation may work like a machine with a highly rule bound, hierarchical bureaucracy that is effective for repetitive tasks and often exemplified by the activities undertaken by government departments. At the opposite end is the 'agile' organisation that responds quickly and flexibly. In the middle are small opportunities to react to the changing environment which is what joint educational partnerships are trying to achieve. Officially, foreign educational institutions have been allowed to establish joint ventures and franchise operations since the late 1990s in China. This means that money, not political or class credentials, impact on educational opportunity. At the business level then, Chinese education has flexibility for some models of internationalisation just as with the "going out" and "bringing in" in terms of pedagogy and practice, but Turner and Acker (2002) argue that local traditions still dominate.

The international aspect of the 'global' paradigm of education has often been questionable in its respect for alternative cultural expressions of teaching and learning, and the educational model mentioned above shows a wide difference between policy and practice. This has created the need for reactive middle players (Dickson 2009). Determining the limitations, Zhou (2006) characterized the Chinese educational system as vertical and intricate: universities are under the administration of provincial governments or affiliated with the Ministry of Education. The diversity of provincial

educational environments was also noted as a factor impeding efficiency. Dickson (2009) identified national regulations of public universities as hindrances to quick competitive reactions. Moreover, new, privately funded, teaching intensive institutions “are more able to innovate quickly and develop curricula that are directly relevant to their middle class customers who are focused on career outcomes” (2009, p. 178).

An estimated 30,000 Chinese students were studying in Australia in the first half of 2002, with an estimated 20,000 plus Chinese students studying in Australian run programs taught in China (AustCham Beijing 2004, p. 11). By 2008 both these figures had nearly doubled (DEEWR 2008). In their 2004 *Business Issues Paper*, the China-Australia Chamber of Commerce in Beijing highlighted the reasons for educational opportunities between the two countries: growing incomes, salary premiums for foreign educated graduates, increasing openness, and shortages of quality higher education and vocational training places. It also noted several areas which were causing business and relationship difficulties between the two countries (AustCham Beijing 2004). These include:

- inconsistent implementation of national policies and regulations on investment (p. 15);
- requirements and restrictions in the foreign currency regime incompatible with standard international practice (p. 26);
- current Chinese laws prevent Australian universities and schools from establishing Wholly Foreign Owned Enterprises (WFOEs) and place tight restrictions on the format and conduct of Joint Venture companies in this sector (p. 43);
- payment of international invoices delayed due to unevenly implemented policy, an unnecessarily complex process making an administrative burden and often also heavily taxed payments with between 10-20% withholding tax and 5% business tax (p. 43); and
- Australian universities, TAFEs and schools should be able to establish their own operations in China to advertise for students, provide visa assistance, etc. Currently they must use a limited number of Chinese agents (p. 44).

Some of the issues could be resolved if, as Li, Wilson and Doran (2009) stress, partnership agreements with a long-term perspective and that include regular comprehensive risk assessment were adopted. They recognise that often a keen staff member establishes an alliance but it is essential that a partnership model with relationship development strategies that respect the attributes of each partner is put in place. Then over time each institution should benefit from the partnership. Risk assessment of the partnership should be formally documented and regularly reviewed together. Matters for discussion may include: “the ability to provide suitable teaching staff; financial aspects of delivering a specific programme of study or research; government legislation; financial stability of the institutional partners; student market and marketing strategy; changes in members of staff; premises and facilities; institutional ownership” (Li, Wilson & Doran 2009, p. 238).

Of particular relevance to the pedagogical focus of this thesis, Adams and Song (2009) emphasise the value of a mutual relationship in its capacity building and two-way knowledge transfer, rather than financial outcomes. They argue that the interests of students and the reputation of the universities must be at the centre of any agreement and, rather than having unemployed graduates, “partnerships need to pay serious attention to the question of the graduate labour market in China” (Adams & Song 2009, p. 202). Furthermore, they believe that the future of collaborative partnerships with HEIs in China will “be determined ultimately, not by finance, but by the relevance of such programs to the country’s future social and economic development” (Adams & Song 2009, p. 202). Both curriculum and strategic educational alliances need to be guided by the adage: ‘act global, think local’.

### 3.5 Higher education curriculum

Higher education curriculum in China has come increasingly under market influences. Until the 1980s, Chinese colleges and universities could not act independently to add to, reduce or change curricula. Everywhere 'the national curriculum' and 'unified teaching materials' were accepted or imposed as a matter of course. All changes to the curriculum and even to a single textbook had to be made with the approval of the central educational authorities. But with the acceleration of reforms the central government gradually relaxed its controls and granted institutions of higher learning greater decision-making power over teaching plans, materials and curricula. A policy issued by the State Education Commission in 1993 to its directly subordinate institutions of higher learning stipulated that institutions could make their own decisions about specialties and subjects, according to the development of disciplines and changing local social needs (State Education Commission 1993).

Subsequent curriculum reforms for Basic Education<sup>15</sup> by implication should assist reforms in higher education. The new objectives for basic education which very strongly echo some of the graduate attributes were:

- Change the trend toward overemphasizing knowledge delivery. Emphasize students’ active attitudes and participation in their studies. Convert the process of obtaining basic knowledge and skills to a process of ‘learning how to learn’;
- Change the curriculum structure that overemphasizes separate subjects. Substitute courses that are more ‘integrated’;
- Change the difficult, complicated, and outdated curriculum content with its overemphasis on textbook knowledge. Promote the connection between curriculum content, the students’ ‘real’ lives, and modern science and technology. Select basic skills that are necessary for students’ lifelong studies;
- Change the tradition of passive learning and rote learning. Develop students’ abilities such as collecting and processing new information, gaining new knowledge independently, analyzing and solving problems, and communicating and cooperating with others; and

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<sup>15</sup> Public education for students aged 3-18 (Ministry of Education PRC 2001).

- Attach more importance to new courses developed by local educational departments (Liu & Teddlie 2003, p. 254).

The goal of learning how to learn or life-long learning is one driver for change. It requires the development of new approaches and techniques for teaching to liberate students from the stress of a single, all important set of examinations and to inspire their creativity and self-directed learning through the use of the internet-based instruction (Ministry of Education PRC 1999; Ministry of Education PRC). Huang (2004) addresses the goal of a dynamic, integrated, student centred curriculum. While referring to the basic education curriculum, each of his six strategies could play a role in meeting some of the needs of Chinese HEIs: develop a professional curriculum management system that empowers teachers, students and local governments; use a framework of theoretical and experimental research to guide the curriculum reform; promote school based curriculum development that meets the local students' needs; integrate information technology with curriculum; support the professional development of teachers; and encourage consultation with public people, social organizations, businesses, educationalists and parents.

Ideological tensions around practice have developed between the conservative/cultural maintenance and the progressive forces, and different strategies have been adopted. To support social goals and to prepare individuals to work towards these goals, schools have kept to mainstream educational philosophies (Gingell & Brandon 2000; Noddings 2005). The more challenging approach is to change the deep-seated social dynamics of learning inside and outside the educational environment. The quicker approach, if China wants an open-minded, visionary and innovative generation of students, would be to produce creative, thought-provoking teaching resources that present an array of ideas beyond the immediate educational needs. The tension has led to three areas of conflict for the transmission of cultural, political and national values in education:

(a) conflict between the co-existence in the curriculum of communist and political education and the individualist tendencies of popular culture; (b) between traditional Chinese values and culture, and the moral challenges to these values in popular culture; and (c) between schools, teacher education and student interactions in response to the presence of popular culture in the classroom (Ho 2006, p. 354).

Qian surveyed Chinese college students and found that "the biggest happiness in life" was "a successful career, a happy family, and good friends, all of which were concerned with individuals" and in sixth place was "contribution to society" (Qian 2003, p. 30). It appears that materialism and individual values are increasing with the developing market economy. Li's survey of desired occupations for Beijing teenagers confirms the importance of money for them. The ratings of

occupations were highest for entrepreneur, scientist, movie or TV star, teacher, soldier and model worker (Li 2002a, 2002b).

Despite the challenges and the clash between the 'harmonious society' ideal from traditional Chinese culture and the orthodox Marxist-Leninist view of class struggle, Confucian knowledge structures continue to influence the content of traditional education. Previously, Chinese traditions and morality were downplayed and during the Cultural Revolution, mocked, but nervousness about rapid economic changes and international influences has led to a resurgence of Confucian values (Keane 2005). In 1989, the Chinese People's Congress started promoting a cultural and ethnic identity using a nationalist discourse based on "creating a wide-spread awareness of the myths, history, and linguistic tradition of the community" (Guo 2004, p. 5). Chua (2001, p. 114) argues that "a 'Confucian-based' cultural China promotes 'ethnicity as cultural and as identity[sic]'". Furthermore, filial obedience and communal solidarity have been chosen as good Chinese virtues in the *Implementation outline on Ethic Building for Citizens*, the rewritten student conduct code, and in textbooks (Law 2006; Ministry of Education PRC 2004; Wang 2004).

To support the teaching of cultural heritage and to build cultural memory, calligraphy has been added into many schools' extra-curricular programs (Li 2004) and "the promotion of traditional festivals is intended to cultivate the spirit, affections and feelings of the Chinese nation, and to create solidarity among the people of different ethnicities on the mainland" ('China to revive traditional festivals to boost traditional culture' 2005). According to Ho (2006), the Chinese government has been trying to reinforce and reinstate traditional Chinese culture, values and art forms into the educational context but also use popular culture: "Modernisation in the school curriculum is being perceived as part of the process of transformation in Chinese political culture from collective communism towards openness to popular culture" (Ho 2006, p. 353). However, successfully implementing this in HE will be difficult as it goes against many previous years of schooling practices. For example: "the newly compiled list of 100 patriotic songs for Shanghai secondary schools has sparked controversy because it includes some songs that encourage individualism rather than a traditional collectivist and heroic dedication to society" (Ho 2006, p. 353).

Turner and Acker (2002, p. 21), based on their study which showed a lack of diversity, believe that lack of alternative models is why "many of the educators in the Chinese system remained the Confucian-educated, conservative, urban, intellectual elite". The student participants in their study were consistent in their accounts of the uniformity of the centrally organised curriculum and teaching methods. They also commented on the absolute nature of knowledge, that was not open to discussion and which consequently influenced the behaviour exhibited by staff, students and in the interactions between them and is a continuous pattern from primary school through to tertiary education.

Teachers were also often mentors and exerted influence not unlike the Confucian master-disciple construct. This manifestation was context related and there could be significant difference between their strict public classroom and private pastoral behaviour. To be successful, students needed high levels of concentration and conformity. Punishment, as both a means for discipline and motivation, was by shaming, humiliating or embarrassing students in front of peers or families. The astute students also developed interpersonal skills that helped to cultivate relationships and limited giving offence. There is no mention of enjoyment in their paper, but rather overt and covert forms of control.

In China, “national curricular policies, which are representative of the interests of the party state, play a decisive role in determining the degree to which international trends are reflected, and who or what will take the leading role in the future of the People’s Republic of China remains to be seen” (Ho 2006, p. 358). An example of the fundamental dilemma is the free expression, equality and free trade promoted by the Internet, which contrasts with the meaningful relationships, social harmony, and cooperation that Confucianism represents as the basis for humanity (Bockover 2003). For all the discussion of embedding popular culture into the teaching curriculum, it is achieved within a Confucian framework that values harmonious interdependence over autonomous independence (Bockover 2003, p. 164). As a medium for sharing resources and ideas web-based education can promote harmonious interdependence and as a solitary learning event web-based education promotes autonomous independence; both are graduate attributes.

### 3.5.1 Web-based education

In 1999 the Ministry of Education (MOE) released the *Action Scheme for Invigorating Education Towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* with a stated aim of increasing university participation rates by 15 per cent by 2010 and to support this, instigated a project called the *Modern Distance Education Project*, which would use technology “to extend China’s limited educational resources to ... its vast population” (Zhang, Niu and Jiang 2002, p. 4). Web based education is significant for a nationwide open education network and lifelong learning system. In 2000 the MOE gave substantial autonomy to 31 universities by granting them online learning licenses; this was increased to 45 universities in 2001.

Zhang, Niu and Jiang (2002, p. 8) examined the consequences and implications of web-based education to the stakeholders which included students, teachers, administrators and policy makers but not employers. They suggested that web-based higher education was a successful alternative route for many people, that it extended the use and sharing of quality educational resources, and allowed for new approaches to thinking and teaching. The result was courses that were more thought provoking, gave students more control of their learning and required teachers to be facilitators. In 2001 the MOE decided that conventional universities (on-campus students) should offer online programs to their students as part of the Chinese lifelong learning system.



### 3.5.2 Student examinations

In imperial China knowledge was tested through a highly competitive, rigorous examination system and focused on repetition of theoretical knowledge. Interestingly, much later other countries adopted the examination system as an exemplar of good governance. Assessment is still largely via national examinations and with the further massification of education it is likely to remain so. As mentioned, examinations serve a number of purposes, not least of which is their apparent fairness and objectivity (Gao 2002). Unfortunately, due to the emphasis on set answers in the national examinations and as “both sides of teaching and learning take the success of national examination as the only goal”, comprehension, problem solving and creative thinking are overlooked (Gao 2002, p. 109). This contrasts with the ideals of the Chinese MOE’s 2004 objectives (see page 3).

### 3.5.3 Graduate attributes

A Chinese focus on graduate attributes may not occur quickly, or even be appropriate, if the purpose of education in China and the west is different. The traditional Imperial examination system served to acculturate and socialize people to a desired moral code but was short on delivering practical knowledge. Current educational reforms are not overtly altering this paradigm; Gao (2002, p. 99) states that “creative thinking [is] implicit in the aims of educational service institutions”. Industry partnerships with higher education develop as a source of research income, voluntary community activities enhance social awareness, and fieldwork encourages “correct” attitudes and respect for rural people and physical labour (Yin & White 1994). All of which may be akin to employability skills, but curriculum change in Chinese universities has not been an outcome. In both China and Australia there is a hidden curriculum of acculturation and socialisation which in Western educational practices is addressed through the acquisition of pragmatic, often curriculum linked, practical knowledge (Curran 2005). Reducing the implicit curriculum in Australia has contributed to the explicit development of graduate attributes, usually through assessment practices. In China the curriculum, and hence by default the graduate skill, focus is on the technical, theoretical knowledge and many of the employability skills are not explicitly included. Eventually the social market-oriented economy might change this. In the meantime, *guanxi* for example (see 4.1.5), which is probably implicit and assumed in China and may not need to be explicit, would have to be explicit if a Chinese curriculum were being taught in Australia because the cultural context does not automatically require it.

While the parents of the current generation have a reduced role in choosing their offspring’s career or work unit, hence making graduate and employability skills more important, this major change has had little impact on some quite instrumental attitudes. Westwood and Lok’s (2003) study on the meaning of work in Chinese contexts, found that “workers in Beijing remain very concerned about the concrete pragmatics of working – adequate financial reward, good working conditions and job security” (p.

157). Furthermore, because of this time of transition, relationships have remained critical but not so much for humanitarian reasons as for maintaining social order and “enabling things to function” (p. 157). Training and developmental opportunities have always been valued, but the current employability pragmatics of understanding the labour market and “what is required to survive and prosper” has not led to a serious focus on the “soft” skills which are part of the graduate attributes. As the Chinese population becomes better educated and competition for ‘good’ jobs increases, these foci will change with employing organizations or government funding linked to graduates finding professional employment. Westwood and Lok conclude: “In China the ongoing reform process continues to reconfigure work, the workplace, the employment relationship, and the labour market. As these changes unfold, accelerate and intensify, it is almost certain that the meanings people attach to work and working will continue to be reshaped” (2003, p. 160). Eventually these meanings and any “convergence of the goals and values of business, government and education” (James, Lefoe & Hadi 2004, p. 2) might radically affect the curriculum.

Although discussion around graduate attributes and where they fit into the curriculum in China is occurring, in the classroom little is changing. While classes are large, exams are still the main form of assessment, and employers are still looking for the top graduates from the top universities, there is no place for graduate attributes. It is a low priority for students who see their examination mark as all important and for teachers who are partly paid according to how well their students perform in the subject’s examination (Liu & Teddlie 2003).

Graduate attributes have been difficult to embed in Australia (Barrie et al. 2009) and James, Lefoe and Hadi (2004, p. 4) note they “open up a particularly interesting pedagogical space despite the notion of graduate attributes being firmly rooted in the idea that the contemporary western secular university is an entrepreneurial university. This is a teaching space which encourages, even demands, that our teaching practice be more than content transmission”. The Chinese MOE uses language that suggests a desire for certain graduate attributes but if, as is commonly reported, teaching in China is via the transmission method even more so than in Australia, then that exacerbates the challenges for embedding many of the graduate attributes.

### **3.6 Graduate employment in China**

Academic research and official government websites are written for different audiences and purposes. The China Education and Research Network website states: “By this September [2003], more than 70% of the newly higher education graduates has successfully found their employment, indicating a smooth development of graduates employment” (MOE 2004, p. 1). Newspaper surveys of college graduates found:

57 percent chose Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, and the capitals of various provinces as the most desirable places of employment and 14.5 percent chose other cities, the total number exceeding 70 percent; and 72.8 percent chose the “opened-up” coastal regions as the most desirable regions for employment, 18 percent chose hinterland regions, and 8.7 percent wanted to go abroad, the total being 99.5 percent (Feng 2002, p. 33).

This information however does not reveal the full picture and raises several questions. For example, is the location of employment the graduate’s first choice? Is it connected to the graduate’s university specialisation? Is the graduate receiving the salary expected?

In arguing for student-centred, mutually beneficial partnerships, Adams and Song (2009, p. 202) pose two questions: “How relevant are the educational programmes? Is there a demand for the graduate skill set being produced?” As a researcher I have tried to answer these questions and link them to a third question “What are the benefits of an Australian degree to a Chinese graduate seeking employment in China?”

The following section provides a more detailed analysis of graduate employment in China.

### **3.6.1 Education has always been linked to employment**

In 2008 China.org.cn, a web site that is the vehicle for promoting China to the world, contained an article by Yang which identified three shifts in employment strategies in China and linked them to educational changes. Firstly, in the planned economy period, 1978 to the mid 1980s, there was limited movement between rural and urban areas, young people with a university degree took employment in their parents’ workplace and if they chose not to, employment was guaranteed by the state if they were graduates. Social status was important and “young employees preferred government departments and large-scale industry to business opportunities” (Yang 2008, p. 1). The second shift occurred in the 1980s when the state permitted some movement of workers between rural and urban areas and from 1985 graduates were able to find their own employment rather than use the state employment system. There were rigid employment processes however, and the penalties for not registering for work through a ‘talent centre’ included: no official permission to get married which meant that any offspring would not be recognised by the state, and unable to work for the government or a state-owned company. The combined effect was that “Young job hunters began to attach greater importance to income and welfare benefits” (Yang 2008, p. 1).

The third shift occurred in the mid 1990s with significant movement from rural to urban areas. At the same time the employment situation was becoming more competitive, Chinese colleges were increasing enrolments, and government departments and state-owned enterprises were reorganising.

Graduates became interested in career paths and working conditions as well as income and welfare benefits. Moreover Yang (2008, p. 1) asserts that:

college graduates prefer to work in a field that interests them, and can balance their choice between what they would like and what is available. Chinese young people are less dependent on their parents, and some of them now set up their own businesses...In summary, there are three characteristic features of the employment market for Chinese youth, these being independence, pragmatism and diversification.

Yang (2008) indicates that while employment and education do influence each other in China, enhanced employment outcomes are not articulated as aspects that can be addressed by curriculum change. Moreover, while industry and professional bodies have a growing voice in China today and have highlighted some shortfalls in graduate skills, the teaching community is not resourced to make significant curriculum change, nor has much research been undertaken to determine what changes to the curriculum are appropriate and feasible. Hence the teaching curriculum has been slow to respond, but it has prevented the opposite situation of Australian universities that many would argue are too influenced by industry and business groups (Marginson 2008). Another possible reason for China's more fixed curriculum is that the focus on technical and content knowledge appears to serve China's political and economic objectives of having a well educated workforce that builds capabilities specifically in the fields where development is deemed important. This is subtly different to the Australian context in which government through funding models has some influence on courses taught, but other means of revenue are also available and there are many industry-university relationships – thus enabling the development of courses with input from community / professional organizations.

### **3.6.2 Selection and recruitment – what employers want**

Huang (2001) extrapolated from the opinions expressed by college students on the issue of employment choice and the methods for obtaining employment to their psychological preparedness and ability to self analyse. The analysis suggested slightly more students favoured freedom to choose their own employment and the increased motivation this gave them, versus the previous system of letting the state decide what they would do and where they would work. Approximately one-third liked the idea that the state would find you a job if you were unsuccessful, a number were concerned about the exploitation of connections and some thought that no change had been necessary to the work unit assignment policy. Attitudes were conflicting: for some the idea of free employment choice carried with it a responsibility that was something to value; for others the old state arranged system was satisfactory.

When students were asked about their immediate employment objectives there was a lack of realistic awareness about their skills, their potential, the market requirements, social experience and the competitive employment environment (Huang 2001). Furthermore many students said that they wanted work outside their area of speciality. About half had little idea about how to find employment; they also lacked confidence in their ability to handle change. Student confusion was further increased because they considered that the state had strict and unreasonable rules regarding employment that ran counter to market needs, that they needed more timely information and guidance, that residency issues were affecting where employment could be found, and that the competition was not always fair. The fact that some students with poor grades obtained good positions through connections was regarded as a problem that the state should address, some thought connections gave a short term advantage only, for some having connections was an enviable achievement and others saw the making of connections as a valid skill in itself.

Huang (2001) identified a number of psychological skills that could be developed in college students: self confidence to evaluate personal behaviour and the situation itself; meet challenges; participate in competition, the basis of which is genuine ability and learning; emotional strength; and, the ability to know oneself and evaluate oneself objectively. He identified several aspects in “proper self-evaluation”:

(a) making a comprehensive and objective evaluation of one’s own scholarly attainments, ability, and moral character and determining what one can do; (b) taking into consideration whether the job one is seeking fits one’s academic specialty; (c) taking into consideration the quantitative demand for one’s specialty in society; and (d) taking into consideration the concrete requirements of the hiring organization concerning the job applicants (Huang 2001, p. 92).

Feng (2002, p. 38) reviewed the employment problems faced by students graduating in 1999 when it was estimated that 30 per cent would not find employment in a ‘timely fashion’. For certain specializations, work environments and locations the supply far exceeded the demand. A dual situation existed, for example, with state owned enterprises, which because of reforms to streamline operations and increased efficiency, had often cut qualified technical personnel. Accordingly, these employing units became more selective in their requirements of graduates and complained that they did not meet the requirements of the position so if employed would require further training. On the other hand private companies and high-tech non-governmental enterprises from the coastal development zones often eagerly recruit ahead of the normal recruiting period the graduates “with strong personal qualities and good overall attributes” (Feng 2002, p. 31).

Feng (2002) suggested that university curriculum specializations were not matching or developing according to market demand forecasting. Students who enrolled in popular specializations were not

receiving an education that was flexible enough to cater for altered market conditions. Overall there was a lack of forecasting of market requirements at both the skill level and the number of graduates.

In 1999 employers started to demonstrate their preference for postgraduates or for graduates with not only double degrees but complementary degrees plus “strong personal qualities and good overall attributes” (Feng 2002, p. 31). However, they still favoured the more reputable universities at the expense of the lesser known or provincial universities.

The Social Surveys Center of the China Youth Daily once compiled statistics on the “advantages and personal deficiencies” of current graduates from twenty-nine institutions of higher learning, including Qinghua and Beijing universities. Statistics show that only 58.9 percent of the graduates felt that their personal qualities were “fairly good,” and 10 percent maintained that they were “very good.” Conversely, 59.1 percent felt that they lacked social experience, 47.4 percent felt that they lacked relevant work experience, 31.4 percent thought that they were poor speakers, and 12.2 percent thought that their academic performance was inadequate (Feng 2002, p. 31).

This perceived lack of skills and work readiness has led to a preference for graduates from China’s more vocational universities even though their basic knowledge is poorer:

Although the “five-university” students, who acquire their knowledge and skills by attending television universities, evening universities, vocational universities, correspondence universities, and adult universities, have the disadvantage of being weaker in basic knowledge, they possess such advantages as abundant practical experience and ideological maturity, the greater likelihood of staying on the job, and greater flexibility. In the last few years, many work units have shown a preference for “five-university” students over regular college and university graduates (Feng 2002, p. 32).

### **3.6.3 Selection and employment – what graduates want**

The supply does not exceed demand in the smaller and more remote cities. But many of these underdeveloped cities have thought that one expensive graduate from a prestigious university could solve all their economic problems rather than trying to attract a range of ‘ordinary talent whose effect on economic returns is less immediate’ (Feng 2002, p. 35). Unfortunately graduates have developed expectations regarding lifestyle, prestige, employment conditions and prospects, and salary that they consider inland locations do not provide. Paradoxically those students who have studied at prestigious institutions have sometimes been the last to find jobs because their expectations are so high.

Feng (2002) also highlighted gender discrimination, 'back door' influences, and an out-dated household registration system as wasting graduate talent, and suggested a centralized market demand forecasting system. He argued that students and employing units needed to adjust and realign their expectations to be more realistic; students should understand that obtaining experience with one work unit opens opportunities for finding work elsewhere and employers need to give more opportunities for new graduates to gain experience.

Lam and Xiao (2000) pinpointed deficiencies in the curriculum of hospitality and tourism courses in China which led to graduates not meeting industry demands. Given the forecasted growth of the industry and associated labour demands, it is crucial to rectify problems that include students' poor conceptual understanding of tangible and intangible forms of service, unrealistic career expectations, lack of workplace experience, little practical skill development, and outdated even irrelevant teaching materials. In September 1999 the National Education Ministry implemented a number of reforms for tourism education: to unify tourism education practices, to guide curricula design, to link tourism education and career paths, and to accelerate sophisticated research (Lam & Xiao 2000, p. 294).

Zhao (2002) identified strategies that students had developed to achieve their career objectives. For most this involved being labelled 'unemployed' while they looked for jobs of their choosing. For others it involved being 'unemployed' and living illegally in a location because it gave them the freedom to move from job to job while at the same time improving their skills and broader knowledge, or because they were tutoring to cover expenses while studying to get into graduate school. It was hoped that further qualifications would mean a more interesting job than the one likely to be assigned to them by the party often in a state owned enterprise in an inland area.

Zhao (2002), like Feng (2002), concluded that one reason for unemployment was that graduates had degrees but no 'real talent'. Once employers started looking for knowledge and ability, which was the new measure of talent, it was up to the graduates to make realistic goals, to determine the steps to become a 'gold collar' worker and to seize the opportunities to demonstrate their usefulness (Zhao 2002, p. 5). These opportunities in addition to requiring students to live illegally and besides requiring diligence and confidence, might involve the development of problem solving and analytical skills.

### 3.7 Summary

The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China website, as viewed on 10 January 2006 and again on 9 October 2009, used data from 1995 to outline a 15 year plan from 1995 and 2010. The focus was on increasing total education enrolments to make nine years of education compulsory and to eradicate illiteracy. The guiding philosophy was to improve the education level of all Chinese

people in order to continue economic growth. There was a strong adherence to education policies with a socialistic direction, for education and production to be linked, and for students to develop culture, discipline and idealism. Clearly the objectives for educational development and reform of the educational systems sit within a Chinese framework with Chinese characteristics.

The move to increase the authority of schools so that policy making can be more localised is some acknowledgement that highly centralised economic and higher education systems were inflexible and not responsive to local needs.

Job-hunting, already widespread, has since 2010 become sole responsibility of graduates. While the MOE recognizes that a comprehensive quality education should assist students, there is no identification of specific attributes that students might require to enhance their employability. The connection between industry, teaching and research is made in a different section on the website and the emphasis is on practical scientific research and 'real productivity' but not employment of graduates or work experience. Education reform aims to highlight the value of reducing the distance between schools and society, equipping students with practical skills, yet instilling the necessary knowledge to be useful to society (Huang 2004; Xinhua News Agency 2005, 6 October), to make education more pleasant, to promote cultural education and to challenge students to think for themselves ('Young, bright and jobless' 2003; Liu & Teddlie 2003). Curriculum and teaching changes are still trying to achieve these aims.

There are a number of measures to improve the professional quality of the teachers and teaching and to encourage their loyalty to education. Teacher training, especially in the HEIs, has been minimal and a teachers' certificate system is being implemented. Other teaching conditions such as promotion and remuneration, health care and housing are being improved. At the same time evaluation of teaching is identified as playing an important role in the improvement of education quality.

Transnational education has existed for many years as a form of knowledge acquisition, then to promote teaching and learning opportunities and more recently as a business. In its latter form, as a business, the students, lecturers and employers have a voice that should be considered. The following chapter examines the cultural and business environment that graduates will be entering and analyses the different business contexts which will confront Chinese graduates.



## Chapter Four Understanding the Chinese business and education context: drivers and barriers

### 4.0 Introduction

Trends in business and education in China tend to reflect long standing social patterns. This chapter foregrounds literature on business developments in China then reviews theories of culture and communication to identify the major constructs and variables that affect employability skills and graduate attributes, to inform the conceptual framework and to assist with hypothesis testing. This fits with the Australia China Chamber of Commerce's (AustCham) advice for commercial success in China which is to have a good understanding of the dynamics and nuances of the Chinese marketplace and know what motivates and influences its people:

China has a rich and ancient culture with tradition that impacts on the attitudes and practices of its people at all levels of society and across all areas of endeavour, including business and commerce...To be commercially successful in China, you will need to understand that there is most often a unique Chinese way of looking at and doing things. This does not necessarily mean you must completely change your business practices for success in China. It just means you need to understand that there are differences (AustCham Beijing 2007b, p. 1).

Since Later Imperial China (Sui dynasty AD 581-618), government positions have been highly prized for their security and stability (Pong & Chow 2002). Government and non-government businesses in China that previously operated mostly with political support now need to be economically viable. This has led to questioning and revaluing of the meaning of work. One of the questions for this thesis is whether redefining work has also led to reframing of work roles and therefore the required outcomes of higher education. Given there have been changes in the political, educational and economic-contexts which need a transition period while people and practices adapt, this thesis provides a snap-shot of a society in transition.

As with educational assessment, there are ways of doing business in China that have deep roots in the Chinese culture. Despite the diversity in dialects, landscape, heritage and wealth, there is a unity resulting from a long, proud and supportive tradition of predominantly Confucian, but also Tao and Buddhist, philosophies (Zhang & Baker 2008). The questions for this chapter are: *How do Chinese educational practices and Chinese business practices affect the employability skills required of new graduates?* and *Is there a difference between how employers perceive business graduates from different courses, in particular onshore compared with offshore courses?* If so, when it comes to the decision about employing a new business graduate, what are the attributes that are considered most favourably? Chen (2001, p. 169) concludes that many Chinese MBA programs “lack the hands on

class assignments, company internships, and joint research initiatives with industry that provide Western business [MBA] students with valuable experience”. If these are the deficiencies for an MBA program in China, it is possible that they also apply to an undergraduate business degree in China.

This chapter reviews several of the external elements which affect an understanding of the framework that has limited industry and professional bodies from contributing to higher education curricula in China. The subsections of the chapter demonstrate the ways in which business goals and structures, globalisation, political agendas and regulatory bodies are more concerned with national than international interests. This analysis is supported by theories of culture and cultural identity, and of Human Resource Management.

## **4.1 Business sectors and structures in China**

Since 2003 the Chinese Government has been classifying enterprises in terms of employee numbers as well as sales, assets and market features:

This reflected the particular attention paid by the Government to small and micro- enterprises (SMEs) in becoming major generators of employment opportunities due to their high labour absorption capacity and labour flexibility. Small enterprises adapted more easily to the external environment than larger enterprises and were the source of new employment opportunities (Ministry of Labour and Social Security & International Labour Office 2004, p. 21).

However, to understand the new economic entities in China and the abbreviations used, this thesis follows Ghose’s (2005) funding source based taxonomy. Ghose (2005) extensively analysed datasets for examining and comparing employment trends inside and outside China. He identified: state-owned enterprises (SOE), collective-owned enterprises (COE), cooperatives (Coop), joint ownership enterprises (JOE), limited liability corporations (LLC), shareholding corporations (SHC), foreign-funded enterprises (FFE), township and village enterprises (TVE). Other commonly used terms are: wholly owned foreign enterprises (WFOE)<sup>16</sup>, foreign owned enterprises (FOE), foreign invested enterprises (FIE), joint ventures (JV), domestic private enterprises (DPE) and, small to medium sized enterprises (SME) or small and micro-enterprises (SME). Foreign invested enterprises (FIEs) include both joint ventures between Chinese and foreign companies and wholly owned entities. From a country in which only SOEs were officially sanctioned in the early years of the communist regime,

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<sup>16</sup> The same as wholly foreign owned enterprises (WFOEs).

now all the above business entities exist in the current partially controlled, market-driven, environment.

Bryson and Sun (2008) offer another way of looking at Chinese businesses. They divide the Chinese economy into six sectors characterised by scale or productive contribution: (1) construction and real estate trade; (2) capital-intensive industries that tend to receive considerable amounts of foreign direct investment (FDI); (3) state-owned, generally monopolistic industries; (4) labour-intensive industries including (5) a small-scale agricultural sector and (6) miscellaneous private industries.

Each enterprise in each sector continues to behave uniquely; still in 2010 some are not motivated by profit alone but by socialist and traditional Chinese community service imperatives (Chen 2001) and “different forms of work imply different degrees to which labour is subject to market controls” (Webber, Wang & Ying 2002b, p. 65). As expected, as opposed to a full market driven economy, “the goals and labour management practices of many communal enterprises reflect social norms of organization rather than profit oriented norms” (Webber, Wang & Ying 2002b, p. 79). SOEs traditionally have had many social obligations that are not faced by Privately Owned Enterprises (POE); this has made them popular with some but has often forced the government to carry losses. With managers of SOEs now on profit incentives and with reduced job and social security for workers, such enterprises are less attractive (Webber, Wang & Ying 2002b, p. 81). At the same time, some managers still refer to concepts like fairness, loyalty and socialist ideals and have goals that prioritise employee benefits rather than profits (Webber, Wang & Ying 2002b, p. 84). while other managers still use cultural practices for personal gain (Garnaut 2010a, February 8).

With the central government wanting to develop a hybrid system of “social capitalism” and world events not always being predictable, the Chinese leadership has

often experienced the worst results of socialism (bureaucracy and lassitude) and of capitalism (windfall gains and stepped-up inflation). Beijing thus has periodically backtracked, retightening central controls at intervals. The government has struggled to (a) collect revenues due from provinces, businesses, and individuals; (b) reduce corruption and other economic crimes; and (c) keep afloat the large state-owned enterprises, many of which had been shielded from competition by subsidies and had been losing the ability to pay full wages and pensions (AustCham Beijing 2007b, p. 11).

Further complexity is evident when examining historic factors and current government interventions. Major differences exist between northern and southern China and between coastal and inland locations. Comparative advantages exist for coastal cities many of which were colonial trading centres, for southern cities who maintain connections with overseas Chinese, for Special Economic

Zones (SEZ) and autonomous regions due to allocated cost benefits, and for certain provinces where there is targeted regional reform and prioritised industries. Differences are significant regarding the pace of change, localised pressures for and barriers against market forms of economy, tax revenue and power shifts, and income disparities. The outcome has been a substantial redistribution of economic and social power between regions and central government which is evidenced “in the re-emerging interregional income disparities and in the scale of rural industrialisation” (Webber, Wang and Ying 2002b, p. 67). The SEZs have allowed controlled economic restructuring, combining socialist principles and capitalist elements of economic management and property ownership, which if unsuccessful could easily be closed. Other experiments trialled in SEZs and then modified for national implementation include labour contracts; a structural wage system based on wage, seniority, position/skills and performance bonus; and social insurance. Even within the first SEZs, the traditional public sectors, SOEs and COEs, were linked closely to the international economy and hence reform in these started much earlier than in other areas (Ying, Webber & Wang 2002, p. 153). Recently SEZs have faced increasing competition internally and externally from rising production costs and are therefore moving to “new and high technological industries, while relocating labour-intensive industries inland” (Ying, Webber & Wang 2002, p. 162).

Acknowledging that in mainland China there is still considerable government involvement and huge bureaucracies in state-owned enterprises, this chapter will focus on small to medium sized, private or foreign-invested organizations. Depending on factors such as ownership, size and structure, there is generally a reliance on extended family and the oldest, closest friends; a sense of needing to give or save face (*mianzi*); and much tacit communication, which are still characteristics of Chinese society. In China there is a consistency between ‘the family business’ and the ‘business family’. The family based model of business which has served the expatriate Chinese very effectively is reappearing in mainland China due to the decline in importance of SOEs, that had for many been ‘family’. At the same time there is an attempt by some Chinese managers to maintain the family nature of a business with its Confucian dimension “for a broader societal network of morally binding, mutually dependent relationships” (Chen 2001, p. 21). While these businesses are self-regulating, there is increasing pressure in Chinese companies to professionalise the senior level of management and to a certain extent professionalising equates to Westernising. The preferred Chinese solution is to find a ‘professional’, qualified Chinese person, from within the extended family or its networks.

Western education and/or authentic work experience may not only bring knowledge and experience to the business, family or otherwise, but working and studying abroad offer a chance for the next generation to break away from the tight network and traditionalist conservatism of Chinese businesses and to start new, independent ventures (Chen 2001, p. 36). In addition, because of pressures of succession, globalization and professionalism, many companies have moved from family ownership

and management to mixed models with some external ownership and professional management. This gives new non-family graduates a chance of finding employment in these organisations.

The differences between sectors, economic entities, management styles, even locations, and the meaning of work in each can be analysed through the lens of identity theory. Peverelli (2006) argues that the definition of corporate identity cannot be static. It is not something constructed and then promoted, but rather a process that connects the company's vision with environmental objectives. Peverelli believes that "an enterprise develops multiple identities in multiple social – cognitive contexts" (2006, p. 4) and each identity develops through a continuous process of constructing and reconstructing. In other words, identities are multi-directional, actor and recipient dependent, and context dependent. If that is so, then the meaning of work has to be dynamic and there is likely to be a specific business related impact on the graduate attributes and employability skills that are perceived to be important, continuing the tension between context dependent and soft or generic skills.

Of particular significance to this thesis is the comment (Wang & Wang 2002, p. 188) that systemic, cooperative relations between businesses, government departments and scientific institutions could assist innovation and integration of research, design and manufacturing. However, the organization of industry in China, which while exhibiting tendencies to both vertical integration and networking, demonstrates few of the cooperative learning processes that can aid the development of local innovations. Chapter Two argued that the desire for innovation was a catalyst for piloting new generalist higher education courses in China; the goal of innovation may not be achieved if the new courses are delivered via the traditional pedagogy which does not promote the development of cooperative learning skills and creative freedom (Garnaut 2010b, January 18). This thesis contends that higher education is included in the research, design and manufacturing matrix of businesses in Australia and innovation, elicited through creative problem solving activities, sometimes connected to the workplace, is a graduate attribute. However, as an employability skill perhaps innovation is put into operation differently by the various Chinese business sectors and more emphatically by the non-family, less traditional sectors.

#### **4.1.2 Employment numbers**

The workforce of urban private enterprises and individual businesses has been increasing steadily; mostly all individual businesses are micro-enterprises, and most private enterprises are small and micro-enterprises (MLSS & ILO 2004, p. 21). Examining employment in urban and rural areas from 1990 to 2003, the percentage of those employed in rural areas dropped from 73.7 percent to 65.6 percent. In the same period the number of employees in state-owned entities decreased by 34.7 million, down to 68.7 million, while the number of those employed by urban individual and private

economic entities increased by 35.9 million, to reach 42.6 million, representing 46.5 percent of the newly employed in the urban areas in the same period (Xinhua 2004).

From 1990 to 2003 the proportion of those employed in tertiary industry<sup>17</sup> rose steadily from 18.5 percent to 29.3 percent, to 218.1 million employees; the proportion of those employed in secondary industry remained at around 21.6 percent, with the number of employees reaching 160.7 million; and the proportion of those employed in primary industry dropped from 60.1 percent to 49.1 percent, with the employees numbering 365.5 million (Xinhua 2004).

GDP quadrupled between 1978 and 2000 and led to substantial growth in the Chinese economy:

with its 1.26 billion people but a GDP of just \$870 per capita, China stood as the second largest economy in the world after the US. Agricultural output doubled in the 1980s, and industry also posted major gains, especially in coastal areas near Hong Kong and opposite Taiwan, where foreign investment helped spur output of both domestic and export goods (AustCham Beijing 2007c, p. 1).

These statistics emphasise the growing private wealth and the move to private urban economic businesses and tertiary industries.

## 4.2 Globalisation

This section considers some of globalisation's impacts on businesses in China. Yip (1995) identified four major drivers of globalisation:

- the global market with its consumer needs, wants and expectations;
- production and labour costs in different countries;
- government rules and regulations regarding taxes, tariffs, quality control and import/export restrictions; and
- competitors' actions

and Chen (2001) added a fifth - a cultural perspective. Chen (2001) suggests that "As business becomes more genuinely globalised – as opposed to simply transnational – the notion of 'global business standards' is unlikely to remain exclusively Western" (Chen 2001, p. 14). The standards are also unlikely to become wholly Confucian. Nevertheless, Chinese business networks can make decisions quickly, connect people and draw upon resources. Therefore "it may be helpful to adopt a more integrative approach to global business practices, and Chinese business may serve as the basis

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<sup>17</sup> Tertiary industries provide services to businesses and/or final consumers (Investopedia 2010).

for this rethinking” (Chen 2001, p. 14). The optimum arrangement might be a combination of Asian entrepreneurship and sense of family with the western practices of “formal strategic planning, clear and consistent accounting and a focus on innovation, customer service and quality” (Chen 2001, p. 42).

Webber, Wang and Ying (2002a, p. 2) argue that to understand China’s transition to a global economy requires an appreciation of the “meaning and significance of globalization for people’s lives; ... the transition in some countries from socialism to capitalism; and about interrelations between globalization and creation of place and region”. They note that individual countries have adopted their own versions of liberalisation, deregulation and globalisation according to national interests, internal conditions, future expectations (Webber, Wang & Ying 2002a, p. 6). On this basis, institutional reform in China has been locally determined, gradual, cumulative, sometimes spontaneous, sometimes driven by the government and has allowed for the “coexistence of centralized political control and market-oriented firms, of state-owned enterprises and capitalist foreign-funded firms” (Webber, Wang & Ying 2002a, p. 8). For China economic transformation and open door policies have helped to legitimise the Party-State leadership and achieve economic development and social stability (Webber, Wang & Ying 2002a, p. 226).

The increasing globalisation of the Chinese economy is clear in Table 15 showing the inflow of foreign capital (Foreign Direct Investment, FDI) which from 1985 to 2004 had an average annual rate of growth exceeding 25 per cent. Factors in this growth were: the opening up of the Chinese economy by Deng Xiaoping; the desire of foreign businesses to use low cost Chinese labour; and the opportunity to enter the largest consumer market in the world (Bryson & Sun 2008).

**Table 15 China’s Utilization of Foreign Capital (100 million US dollars)**

Year	FDI	Year	FDI
1985	16.61	1995	375.21
1986	18.74	1996	417.26
1987	23.14	1997	452.57
1988	31.94	1998	454.63
1989	33.92	1999	403.19
1990	34.87	2000	407.15
1991	43.66	2001	468.78
1992	110.07	2002	527.43
1993	275.15	2003	535.05
1994	337.67	2004	606.3

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (cited in Bryson and Sun 2008, p. 5). Table 2 China’s Utilization of Foreign Capital (100 million US dollars)

Table 16 details the levels of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in various sectors of the economy. The figures for the “investment quantity” and the “composition rate”, which is the percentage of total FDI in a particular sector as a percentage of the country total, show clearly that manufacturing is dominating.

**Table 16 FDI Investment by Main Sector: 2005 (USD 100 millions)**

Year	2003		2004		2005	
Sector	IQ	CR (%)	IQ	CR (%)	IQ	CR (%)
Manufacturing	369.4	69.04%	430.2	70.96%	424.5	70.38%
Production and Distribution of Electricity, Gas and Water	-	-	11.4	1.88%	13.9	2.30%
Transport, Storage and Post	8.7	1.63%	12.7	2.10%	18.1	3.00%
Information Transmission, Computer Service, Software	-	-	9.2	1.52%	10.1	1.67%
Wholesale and Retail Trade	11.2	2.09%	7.4	1.22%	10.4	1.72%
Real Estate	52.4	9.79%	59.5	9.81%	54.2	8.99%
Leasing & Business Services	31.6	5.91%	28.5	4.70%	37.5	6.22%
Sum of the sectors	473.3	88.45%	558.9	92.18%	568.7	94.28%
Total	535.1	100%	606.3	100%	603.2	100%

Note: IQ=Investment Quantity, CR (%) = Composition Rate (%)

Source: Statistical Communiqué on the national economy and development of Chinese society: 2003-5 (cited in Bryson and Sun 2008, p. 6). Table 3 FDI Investment by Main Sector: 2005 (USD 100 millions)

Globalisation has increased the number and range of China’s international partners of which Australia is but one. In addition to primary resources, Australia has a large investment in transnational educational programs with China, often as contractual joint ventures. The role of the China – Australia Chamber of Commerce is to maximise business opportunities between the two countries. It regularly publishes advice to existing and potential clients and the tone is often cautionary: “There are great opportunities in the Chinese market but also significant risks. To succeed, Australian businesses will need to be committed, well prepared, well resourced, and very vigilant” (AustCham Beijing 2004, p. 11). Then later, “China is still affected by the legacy of the state-owned enterprises, which often are still major players in the economy. The finance and distribution sectors are still heavily influenced by government participation” (AustCham Beijing 2007a, p. 1). The implication is that there are historic reasons to be concerned about contemporary transparency and bureaucratic efficiency. Graduate attributes with a cultural focus might be valuable here.

The terminology and the way globalisation is nuanced through supporting statements, official elaboration and actions are critical if the Chinese government wants to keep control of its socialist



market economy. For some Chinese people ‘globalisation’ carries historically linked, colonial connotations (Chen 2001, p. 158), whereas ‘modernisation’ is thought to be a process that can be controlled by the Chinese. In this light, a Chinese graduate in preference to an overseas non-Chinese graduate has the advantages of a cultural “understanding of face issues, may be able to interpret confusing signals from the government and put seemingly incoherent or inconsistent policies in perspective” (Chen 2001, p.175). In addition they understand the “complex mix of feelings of inferiority (linked to the colonial past and relative inexperience with global business practice) and superiority (born out of cultural heritage and national pride, including recent economic successes and market potential)” (Chen 2001, p. 175).

In 2006 Vice-Premier Wu Yi opened discussions about how foreign firms might tender for government contracts (2006a; Toy 2006b). From the perspective of this thesis: What will happen to the Chinese employment market, to new graduates’ employment prospects, if and when the Chinese government allows foreign firms to tender for government contracts? If there is a stipulation that the foreign firms must employ a percentage of local people, will the local employees have the skills needed? If there is a perception that the local graduates do not have the requisite skills, will this mean an authentic, national, broadening of the higher education curriculum that legitimises more than anything else the process rather than content skills? Generic graduate skills continue to be the area that teachers and students consider to be the least teachable. Even when there is agreement on relevance, the conflict with teaching discipline knowledge, the practicalities of the classroom environment and expectations of some students, parents and teachers, mean there has been little focus on them. Consequently, because of the emphasis in Australian curriculum on graduate skills beyond simply textbook knowledge, the incorporation of graduate skills particularly without contextualisation, has led to tension when Australian higher education teaching programs have been delivered in China.

### **4.3 Theories regarding culture and communication**

China is Australia’s second most important trading partner (Australian Trade Commission 2009). While some of this success has been achieved through strategic knowledge, other success has been more serendipitous. To inform business communication practices, there has been extensive research into different national and cultural business mores and the underlying values, given “the stress on building socialism with Chinese characteristics and establishment of the goal of rejuvenating the Chinese nation [which] shows that our national culture has already become an important base for interpreting the cultural background of China’s policies and indicating her future direction” (Gan 2009, p. 99). Both Inglehart and Carballo (1997) and North (1990) maintain that cultural factors are informal constraints on societies that are as relevant as formal institutional constraints. As Hofstede

(2004, p. 300) explains: “Institutions are the crystallizations of culture, and culture creates institutional arrangements. For example, the differences found in the relative importance attributed to family interests between and even within parts of the world are reflected in the role of families in business ownership”.

Following a very brief overview of Confucianism, the World Values Surveys, some Hofstedian models, the Chinese Values Survey, and *guanxi*, this section will focus on the Cultural Connections Model and Acculturation Theory as frameworks for current practices and for analysing the research survey data. The caveat is that they are only frameworks; humans are “creatures of habit”, and also unique, unpredictable, characters. The population of China is as diverse as any population and rather than over-generalising, many theoretical explanations may exist side by side.

#### 4.3.1 Confucianism

There seems little argument that Chinese traditional values especially Confucianism, that have permeated Chinese society and history for centuries, are intrinsic to the Chinese way of life; they have affected China’s modernisation process (Hayhoe 1989) and continue to affect a Chinese person’s perception of what is important and what is not (Lan et al. 2008). A major difference between Chinese and Western cultures is the Chinese emphasis on discipline and individual obedience for a collective benefit. It is argued by Hill and Huang (2005) that three core Chinese cultural values are: collectivism (focus on the group’s welfare); high power distance (respect for and obedience to authority figures and elders plus acceptance of differences in power and status) and intra-group harmony (the rejection of open-conflict in personal relationships) which is linked to maintaining and giving ‘face’ and group cohesion (Lan et al. 2008).

Chinese culture has traditionally valued learning and recent political emphasis and interest in Confucianism has reinforced this value (Spence 2008); even though Confucian thought and culture have at times been an obstacle to China’s development, and have been both a way of controlling and binding national learning to national identity (Gan 2009). In Confucianism, rules are enunciated for the social behaviour of every individual, theoretically governing the entire range of human interactions in society. The basic teaching of Confucius is contained in the Five Constant Virtues: humanity, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faithfulness (Li 1994 cited in Li & Chang 2001). In addition, Confucius defined the five basic human relationships and principles for each, called Wu Lun. See Table 17.

**Table 17 Basic Confucian human relationships and principles**

Basic Human Relations	Principles
Sovereign and subject (or master and follower)	Loyalty and duty
Father and son	Love and obedience
Husband and wife	Obligation and submission
Elder and younger brothers	Seniority and modelling subject
Friend and friend	Trust

Source: Fan (2000, p. 4)

Confucian philosophy and Chinese culture believe that balance and harmony in social and economic relationships lead to prosperity. In order to attain harmony, individuals are “expected to subordinate themselves to the good of the family and ... the business” (Chen 2001, p. 88). As the environment is not static, any change creates competing tendencies that must be balanced, so “flexibility and openness to change” are regarded as important virtues for maintaining harmony (Chen 2001, p. 89). In relation to higher education, how one interprets flexibility and openness is clearly a context specific employability skill. What some may see as collusion the Chinese may see as cooperation; while Westerners may want to negotiate and sign a contract, the Chinese may prefer an ongoing dialogue.

While not all Chinese people practise Confucianism, most would agree that there has been an enduring - sometimes encouraged, sometime discouraged - effect of his teachings that influences teaching and learning in China (Li & Chang 2001). His maxims stress the importance of learning, the need to respect a good teacher, being modest and self critical, being independent, being humble and listening, repeating and practising, and thinking and reviewing (Li & Chang 2001). Some of these behaviours can be found in the Chinese school curriculum and in higher education in China. If so, then some (being independent, thinking and reviewing) seem to overlap with the western graduate attributes. In contrast, Cheng (1994, p. 2) argued that when educational quality was measured in China the emphasis was less about the relevance of the curriculum and more on human relations and moral performance, conformity and uniformity, and effort rather than abilities. Moreover, developing the individual in the Chinese system was only the endpoint if it served the government’s objectives. If this is still the case, Confucian maxims which could align with western graduate attributes are being overwhelmed by quite “soft” skills, some endorsed more than others by a particular societal context. Shi (2004) asserts that Confucian learning culture emphasises individualistic characteristics, while research by Kingston and Forland (2008) demonstrated that East Asian learners are autonomous and reflective, at least when studying overseas. Perhaps these reflect neo-Confucian values.

### 4.3.2 World Values Surveys

The World Values Surveys of Inglehart and Caballo (1997, p. 35) have produced a database that can compare religion, politics, work, economic growth, family values, sexual norms, and gender roles, reinforcing the concept that societal groups develop distinct cultural identifiers:

Survey data from scores of societies reveal an astonishingly high degree of constraint between the basic values held by peoples of different societies. Furthermore, we find huge differences between the basic values of peoples in different cultural groups. Though individual-level constraint is relatively low, given societies have highly constrained and highly distinctive worldviews. We believe that this is true because, in a given economic and technological environment, certain cultural components tend to go together. They do so because they are mutually supporting and conducive to the survival of the given society.

Inglehart and Caballo (1997) relate the patterns of cultural variation to modernisation theory which implies that distinct cultural patterns lead to distinct forms and processes of industrialisation. They find cultural differences to be coherent and stable and “distinctive cultural zones exist-even apart from the fact that these societies have widely differing levels of economic development and different levels of modernization and postmodernization” (Inglehart & Caballo 1997 p. 46). They conclude that the behaviours and “world view of a given people reflects its entire historical heritage” (Inglehart & Caballo 1997, p. 46), not just economic factors. Their data supports a Confucian cluster, based on regionally consistent responses from eastern Asian countries. As with other research into cultural categorisations, such as that based on Hofstede (discussed below) any generalisations, particularly at the level of an individual, should be made cautiously (Kingston & Forland 2008; Inglehart & Caballo 1997).

### 4.3.3 Cultural dimensions

In order to explain cross-cultural communication processes, Hofstede (1984) identified four dimensions of corporate culture that affect the way people behave at work and, based on this research, suggested at which end of the dimension certain national norms are more likely to be found. They included high versus low power distance which is the extent to which a society accepts that power is unequally distributed, high versus low avoidance of uncertainty, female versus male traits, individualistic versus collectivistic beliefs and the effect on loyalty. In 1991 Hofstede added a fifth dimension known as Confucian Dynamism that separates cultures into short term and long term orientation and drives human development through, for example, education. According to Hofstede (1991, p. 166) the short term are the more static, negative, traditional Confucian values and long term are the more dynamic, positive, future focused Confucian values. The first four dimensions have been

regularly criticised for their limitations but not overlooked in practice; the fifth has been variously criticised for its philosophical and methodological conception, empirical support and difficulties in application, and hence is often ignored (Fang 2003).

In this chapter differences in location and business entities are noted which negate the idea of one set of cultural dimensions being ascribed accurately to a whole nation<sup>18</sup>. Thus the idea of one set of behavioural standards is also unlikely. Nevertheless, they can provide a guide to interpreting actions and ideas and so should be considered when analysing the research data. Of course, an attribute that fits with eastern or western or Confucian cultures might have been developed without any of those influences. The following studies found cultural differences in workplace based practice.

Hofstede (2004, p. 292) asserted that business goals and corporate governance differ between countries. In China the state is often no longer the sole business owner but, given its history as a collectivist society, there is a traditional moral link between individuals and their organizations. For example, firing of employees is not illegal but may harm an organisation's public image and good standing with authorities. Some Chinese assume that globalisation and the presence of foreign companies will destroy their uniqueness and that all business leaders will become like the Americans. Hofstede argues that these differences are embedded in the centuries old national culture, which makes such convergence of business practices unlikely. Similarly Yang (1996) has moved away from his earlier assertion that rapid industrialisation favours more individualistic characteristics and argues that collectivism and harmony can survive beside individualism, even in the modern industrial era. This reflects Confucianism - finding a middle path - but it does not mean that other organisations may not also use the strategy of compromise. In a country the size of China, it is not surprising to find examples of thriving coastal cities full of entrepreneurs and individuals open to change, as well as less developed more traditional cities, often in the central and western provinces.

In another study, Hofstede (2004, p. 296) compared goals of business leaders as perceived by junior managers and professionals from countries working during the day and attending MBA classes at night. Similarities and differences among country/university groups were analysed through a hierarchical cluster analysis that sorted the universities according to the similarity of their scores. Chinese MBA students studying abroad, assessing Chinese business leaders, rated the attribution of noble goals higher than other MBA students, then personal goals and of least importance the profit goal:

- Respecting ethical norms
- Patriotism, national pride
- Honour, face, reputation
- Power

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<sup>18</sup> Schwartz (1994), Trompenaars (1997) and Inglehart (1991) also developed cultural value dimension theories.

- Responsibility towards society
- Profits 10 years from now

The cluster which included Australia produced a profile that rated family as the most important goal for business leaders ahead of individual, business and longer term goals:

- Family interests
- Personal wealth
- Power
- This year's profits
- Game and gambling spirit
- Growth of the business (p. 297)

Lockstrom and Moser (2008, p. 29) concluded that for five of the nine Chinese companies in their study “China-specific cultural standards have been defined: Trust and respect, collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and negotiation”. However, they cautioned that this is not a fixed number. “Under different circumstances, with observation of different companies from different areas a differing set of cultural standards might be significant. Hence, it has to be concluded that the set of cultural standards can be extended at any time” (Lockstrom & Moser 2008, p. 29). A research method for this thesis that allows for new ideas to emerge, namely the extension of cultural standards, is explored in Chapter Five.

#### 4.3.4 Chinese Value Survey

To counter criticisms of being Western-centric, Bond worked with Chinese colleagues to develop the Chinese Value Survey (CVS). This research identified and measured cultural values (see Table 18) within the context of a Confucian based, Chinese social value system (Bond 1988; Bond & Hwang 1986; Bond, Leung & Schwartz 1992). It provided a way of interpreting value perceptions of ethnic Chinese that appeared to lack validity when related to Western values. For this thesis, values such as humbleness, moderation and non-competitiveness need to be explored as possible behaviours within the graduate attributes required in China.

Table 18 The 40 Chinese values in the Chinese Value Survey

<b>The 40 Chinese values in the Chinese Value Survey</b>	
1. <i>Xiao (Fucong fumu, zunjin fumu, zunchong zuxian, shanyang fumu)</i>	Filial piety (Obedience to parents, respect for parents, honouring of ancestors, financial support of parents)
2. <i>Qinlao</i>	Industry (Working hard)
3. <i>Rongren</i>	Tolerance of others
4. <i>Suihe</i>	Harmony with others
5. <i>Qianxu</i>	Humbleness
6. <i>Zhongyu shangci</i>	Loyalty to superiors
7. <i>Liyi</i>	Observation of rites and social rituals

8. <i>Li shang wang lai</i>	Reciprocation of greetings, favors, and gifts
9. <i>Renai (Xu, renqing)</i>	Kindness (Forgiveness, compassion)
10. <i>Xueshi (Jiaoyu)</i>	Knowledge (Education)
11. <i>Tuanjie</i>	Solidarity with others
12. <i>Zhongyong zhidao</i>	Moderation, following the middle way
13. <i>Xiuyang</i>	Self-cultivation
14. <i>Zun bei you xu</i>	Ordering relationships by status and observing this order
15. <i>Zhengyigan</i>	Sense of righteousness
16. <i>En wei bing shi</i>	Benevolent authority
17. <i>Bu zhong jingzheng</i>	Non-competitiveness
18. <i>Wenzhong</i>	Personal steadiness and stability
19. <i>Lianjie</i>	Resistance to corruption
20. <i>Ai guo</i>	Patriotism
21. <i>Chengken</i>	Sincerity
22. <i>Qinggao</i>	Keeping oneself disinterested and pure
23. <i>Jian</i>	Thrift
24. <i>Naili (Yili)</i>	Persistence (Perseverance)
25. <i>Naixin</i>	Patience
26. <i>Baoen yu baochou</i>	Repayment of both the good or the evil that another person has caused you
27. <i>Wenhua youyuegan</i>	A sense of cultural superiority
28. <i>Shiying huanjing</i>	Adaptability
29. <i>Xiaoxin (Shen)</i>	Prudence (Carefulness)
30. <i>Xinyong</i>	Trustworthiness
31. <i>Zhi chi</i>	Having a sense of shame
32. <i>You limao</i>	Courtesy
33. <i>An fen shou ji</i>	Contentedness with one's position in life
34. <i>Baoshou</i>	Being conservative
35. <i>Yao mianzi</i>	Protecting your 'face'
36. <i>Zhiji zhijiao</i>	A close, intimate friend
37. <i>Zhenjie</i>	Chastity in women
38. <i>Guayu</i>	Having few desires
39. <i>Zunjing chuantong</i>	Respect for tradition
40. <i>Caifu</i>	Wealth

Source: Based on *The Chinese Culture Connection* (1987)

Themes based on a factor analysis of responses were labelled: Integration, Confucian work dynamism, Human heartedness and Moral discipline. Table 19 shows how the 40 values were grouped under these themes.

**Table 19 The 40 values grouped thematically**

Value loading > .55 on the factor analysis of standardized CVS country means	
<i>CVS I (Integration)</i>	<i>CVS II (Confucian work dynamism)</i>
Tolerance of others (.86)	Ordering relationships (.64)
Harmony with others (.86)	Thrift (.63)
Solidarity with others (.61)	Persistence (.76)
Non-competitiveness (.85)	Having a sense of shame (.61)
Trustworthiness (.69)	Reciprocation (–.58)

Contentedness (.65)	Personal steadiness (–.76)
Being conservative (.56)	Protecting your ‘face’ (–.72)
A close, intimate friend (.75)	Respect for tradition (–.62)
Filial piety (–.74)	
Patriotism (–.62)	
Chastity in women (–.70)	
<i>CVS III (Human-heartedness)</i>	<i>CVS IV (Moral discipline)</i>
Kindness (.72)	Moderation (.65)
Patience (.88)	Keeping oneself disinterested and pure (.56)
Courtesy (.76)	Having few desires (.67)
Sense of righteousness (–.57)	Adaptability (–.71)
Patriotism (–.62)	Prudence (–.58)

Source: The Chinese Culture Connection (1987, p. 150)<sup>19</sup>

Moving from the Chinese Value Survey, Hwang (1997) in developing Chinese conflict resolution models, analysed the role of Confucian ethics in daily interpersonal relationships. Hwang noted that the Confucian ethical system of *Jen-Yi-Li* (benevolence-righteousness propriety) advocates hierarchical benevolence according to the closeness of the relationship, which is unlike the Western concept of universal justice and equity. In addition Confucian cultural traditions tend to use three social exchange rules (need rule, *renqing* rule of kindness and compassion and equity rule); once a rule is chosen for a particular exchange then it should be adhered to. Hwang identifies Confucian cultural ideas that still pervade interactions, namely *face*, *harmony* and *family*. The public image of *face* is determined independently by one’s performance or career (*mianzi*), or one’s moral conduct (*lian*) and is still held in high regard. The vertical power structure of families has weakened slightly but harmony through forbearance (to control and to suppress one’s emotion, desire, and psychological impulse; *ren*), endurance (not only to restrain one’s psychological impulse, but also give up one’s personal goal), perseverance (to avert all difficulties to attain one’s final goal; *jianren*) and indirect communication is still promoted. In contrast, horizontal relationships are a relatively contemporary development and open to bargaining and mediation (Hwang 1997, p. 26). Significantly indirect communication could be a Chinese graduate attribute as western graduate attributes tend to focus on direct communication skills.

Outside China the organizational attributes of the Chinese business family such as small to medium size, family ownership and cross-sharing, centralized and speedy decision making, and high diversification, have four culturally based features: family-directed operation, dominant family head, enduring roles and family obligations, and the family-financed, family –accountable corporation (Chen 2001, p. 24). When any of these businesses enter the new ‘open’ China, these traits appear to remain. On the other hand, in the Chinese cultural context business success or failure reflects the

<sup>19</sup> Also Fang 2003, p. 353 Table 4



glory or disgrace of the family, so adaptability is vital but always based on a nexus of business and family concerns.

#### 4.3.5 Relationships: *Guanxi*

The list of 40 Chinese values could be augmented and different expressions used; they suggest ways of living generally more so than operating strategically in the business world. *Guanxi* is not mentioned but *li shang wang lai* (reciprocation of greetings, favours, and gifts), *tuanjie* (solidarity), *baoen yu baochu* (repayment) and *yao mianzi* (protecting face) are, which relate to various parts of the cultural concept of the relationship / obligation cultivation to secure reciprocal favours. *Guanxi* as a norm of the Chinese system of interpersonal connections has “strong implications for interpersonal and interorganisational dynamics” (Park & Luo 2001 p. 455). The existence of norms related to *guanxi*, such as *mianzi* and *renqing*, as shown by Hwang (1997), indicate that traditional Chinese people still value *guanxi*-oriented behaviours. These social norms have a sound cultural foundation in Confucianism that emphasises relation-centred social harmony (Li 2008) and extend into business operations as demonstrated previously when graduates with connections were the ones who got jobs.

*Guanxi* is a form of social capital, of connections to be nurtured through reciprocity, mutual obligation, shared experiences and goodwill. Chen explains: “Since the Chinese in general prefer to do business with people they know, or with friends of friends, they devote a substantial amount of time and energy to establishing relationships with people they find respectable. It is this commitment of time to building relationship with others that truly defines *guanxi*” (Chen 2001, p. 46). While Western-educated Chinese business graduates may not have well established *guanxi* networks, it is important for employability that either by respecting the connections of possible future employers or by cautiously building their own networks (the wider the network the greater the manoeuvrability), they do not overlook such cultural and social connections. Their familiarity with both cultures and business settings can provide an important link between East and West (Chen 2001, p. 51). Even so, there can be cultural implications, as Western-educated Chinese may meet “resentment from Chinese nationals, who may envy those who have had the opportunity for higher education ... in the West and may be suspicious of their commitment to the homeland. Chinese ethnicity may facilitate entry and communication, but it does not necessarily guarantee an individual’s Chinese expertise and status” (Chen 2001, p. 51). A Western educated graduate looking for employment in China needs to remember that business and social lives overlap greatly in China. This may also happen in western countries but the Chinese norm potentially conflicts with Western notions of the privacy of family life. Hence “one of the best ways to demonstrate sincerity and maintain *guanxi* is to make the effort to get to know the families of Chinese associates” (Chen 2001, p. 60).

Research indicates that expanding regulations and policies to build market mechanisms and the introduction of foreign technical and managerial expertise, central to China's ongoing transition to become a market-oriented economy with socialistic characteristics (Child & Tse 2001), have resulted in changes to both *guanxi*'s significance and to the practice of specific *guanxi*-related behaviours (Millington, Eberhardt & Wilkinson 2006). On the other hand, while the term *guanxi* may be being used less, Chen (2001, p. 65) identified *guanxi* as a job search strategy for Chinese students and argued that "resourceful use of 'guanxi' far from contradicting the notion of an 'enterprising self' is an integral part of it (in China as elsewhere)". In fact *guanxi* as a strategy is similar to relationship management that has become increasingly important for successful global alliances and partnerships.

In Li's (2008) survey, *guanxi* is still important in the business environment particularly in or between organisations where formal processes are under-developed or less effective. The benefits cited by 14 organisations are summarised as a ranked order in Table 20. Attributes that explore relationships and personal liabilities may therefore be relevant to this research.

**Table 20 Reasons for *guanxi*'s importance**

No	Reasons	Cases (14 in all)
1	Bringing in more business through <i>guanxi</i> networks	5
2	Establishing trust between the subject and business partners	5
3	Being cooperative when new circumstances exist	5
4	Winning business when competing with competitors at the same level	4
5	Cooperation in the long term	4
6	Getting more information from business partners	3
7	Better understanding of the business partners	3
8	Important to the subject's performance assessment	3
9	Making profits for both parties	2
10	Identifying and searching for long-term business partners	2
11	Establishing trust between the firm of the subject and the organization of the business partner	1
12	Pricing may be different	1

Source: Li (2008)

#### 4.3.6 Cultural Orientations Model

To improve understanding of the cross cultural environment in China, Huang, Meade, Wu, Zhao, Wen and Shi (2004, p. 2) developed the Cultural Orientations model to examine the theory of cross cultural management and identified the following ten dimensions:

- Environment: How individuals view and relate to the people, objects, and issues in their sphere of influence
- Time: How individuals perceive the nature of time and its use

- Action: How individuals view actions and interactions
- Communication: How individuals express themselves
- Space: How individuals demarcate their physical and psychological space
- Power: How individuals view differential power relationships
- Individualism: How individuals define their identity
- Competitiveness: How individuals are motivated
- Structure: How individuals approach change, risk, ambiguity, and uncertainty
- Thinking: How individuals conceptualize.

By applying these definitions to earlier data they established national traits (see Table 21).

**Table 21 Comparative Cultural Orientations Model**

	<b>China</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>Japan</b>	<b>USA</b>
<b>Environment</b>	harmony	control	harmony	control
<b>Time</b>	past	future	future	present
<b>Action</b>	being	doing	being	doing
<b>Communication</b>	high context	low context	high context	low context
<b>Space</b>	public	private	public	private
<b>Power</b>	hierarchy	hierarchy	hierarchy	equality
<b>Individualism</b>	collectivist	individualistic	collectivist	individualistic
<b>Competitiveness</b>	cooperative	competitive	cooperative	competitive
<b>Structure</b>	order	order	order	flexibility
<b>Thinking</b>	systemic	linear	systemic	linear

Source: Huang et al. (2004, pp. 2-3)

This research reverts to a superordinate view and reflects an interest in not just defining what it means to be Chinese but what it means in a business environment that is becoming more multicultural. Being aware of how others might be viewing a situation can assist with cross-cultural interaction. For a Bachelor of Business graduate seeking employment in China with a multinational organisation, many orientations may co-exist within the one organisation; awareness of diversity would help (VU Graduate Capability 5).

#### **4.3.7 Acculturation theory**

From the 1980s Chinese students were sent to overseas universities as an effective way of acquiring the advanced technology and know-how of western countries (Wang, Webber & Ying 2002, p. 22). With an estimated return rate of only 40% (Wang et al. 2002, p. 22) this strategy had limited success. Nevertheless, the returnees have been responsible for developing many new firms including high-tech and information technology, bio-engineering, new materials and law firms. Mullins (2006) argues that graduates need to continue their studies overseas because of state of the art facilities, research

opportunities, possibilities for a better quality of internship or work place experience, greater focus on innovation and creativity, and inter-faculty communication. However he adds that China's rapid economic and social progress, government tax breaks, grants and other incentives, and "a series of preferential policies entice the talented, Western-trained brains back to their homeland" (Mullins 2006 p. 45). For the Chinese students who study in Melbourne and then return to China as graduates seeking employment, the effects of acculturation, most likely a personal hybrid of many experiences (Burnapp 2006), need to be considered and, as Chen (2001) mentions, there may be negative and positive implications. The Chinese graduates may be looking for employment with FIEs and there is evidence that Chinese managers returning from extended study and work abroad are taking on leadership roles in these organizations (Zhang, Wei & Kelly 2008).

McSharry, Burges and Wadeson (2005) explained that re-entry shock can result when graduates and managers return home and discover that the expected opportunities do not automatically exist as a result of their overseas degrees. Many of these 'sea turtles', a common translation of the Chinese term, have been disappointed at the lack of additional opportunity and higher salary. The possible reasons include the slow rate of change in many Chinese organisations, the still strongly traditional way of entering into an organisation by using connections and relationships, and the belief that overseas degrees and experience make it difficult to fit into a more conservative workplace in China. Preliminary results of a Hong Kong<sup>20</sup> study suggest that perceptions of being different in the workplace are not valued, and diversity is considered a problem rather than a resource (McSharry et al. 2005).

As indicated by Schlossberg, Lynch and Chickering (1989, p. 14), the re-entry experience is a process of transition which "alters one's role, relationships, routines, and assumptions" affected by variables such as length of time abroad (Sahin 1990), differences between home and host cultures (Sussman 2002), and personality traits (Furukawa 1997). Common challenges resulting from reverse culture shock include academic problems, cultural identity conflict, social withdrawal, depression, anxiety, and interpersonal difficulties (Sahin 1990). Returnees also report experiencing alienation, disorientation, stress, value confusion, anger, hostility, helplessness, disenchantment, and discrimination (Raschio 1988); the returning 'home' after a prolonged absence in a different culture can be more disorientating than the original culture shock of entering a different cultural milieu (Sussman 2002). On the other hand, studies also report positive re-entry experiences such as more appreciation of the host culture (Grove & Hansel 1983), positive changes in values orientation (Uehara 1989) and more awareness and acceptance of cultural differences (Sussman 2002).

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Acculturation difficulties in the workplace may be minimised by the development of appropriate graduate attributes.

There are three phases for new employees succeeding in organisations: entry, socialization and mutual acceptance (Furnham 2005). In this research the employer is being asked about the skills needed by the graduate at the entry stage. For some graduates the early experience of employment might be equated to a culture shock, not unlike that of acculturation, and the challenge is to acquire the social and cognitive constructs to understand, replicate and hence thrive in the new environment. According to Van Oudenhoven, Van der Zee and Van Kooten (2001), whose studies of the successful adaptation strategies of expatriates can be extrapolated both to graduates working in unfamiliar environments and to students returning from overseas studies, open mindedness, adventurousness, action-orientation and commitment to the company were the best predictors of whether individuals gave total allegiance or thought of themselves as dual citizens. Chinese Bachelor of Business graduates who have successfully studied in Australia may well have these traits and employers in China may value their dual citizens differently. For example, a Chinese employee of a foreign owned company might be required to meet the expectations of the parent company as well as local expectations. Such expectations may be incompatible and lead to communication difficulties and questioning of company and personal loyalties and values. Chen's (2001) warning aside, a graduate who has studied overseas may deal more effectively with such ambiguities than one who lacks international experience.

An alternative and more uniquely Chinese angle to acculturation relates to globalisation. Increasing contact and interdependence across nations and cultures due to economic globalisation has increased internationalisation of perspectives but not necessarily changed fundamental values or traditional beliefs. In China, where culture is strong and deep-rooted partly due to its longevity as a nation and independence from foreign influence, the Chinese have maintained their common values, attitudes and identity. However, studies are inconclusive about why, how or if Chinese returnees experience less reverse cultural shock because of the strength of their heritage (Zhang, Wei & Kelly 2008).

#### **4.3.8 Meaning of work**

Westwood and Lok (2003) contend that different cultures have different views of work and variables relating to the centrality of work, work goals, work outcomes, work role identification and societal norms of work. In addition there are historical, political and ideological constructs to the meaning of work which impact on the conceptualising of this thesis. As Westwood and Lok (2003, p. 140) explain: "The meanings people hold about work are likely to be formative with respect to work attitudes such as job satisfaction and commitment and to have a determining effect on such key

variables as motivation, performance, turnover, and pro-social behaviour”; in other words, workplace behaviours and the attributes required are quite context specific.

Based on data collected between 1996 and 1997, Westwood and Lok (2003, p. 142) note that since the economic reforms of 1978 work experience in China has moved away from the allocated work unit, the ‘iron rice bowl’<sup>21</sup>, controlled remuneration and restricted movement. Even so, by 2003 they did not believe any major changes in attitudes and work meaning had occurred. With the 1994 minimum wage legislation and the 1995 Labour Law which introduced contracts with termination options, Westwood and Lok (2003, p. 148) saw only a very small shift. Furthermore they argued “values and attitudes in relation to work run inter-generationally and that at times they lag behind objective changes in the nature and condition of work and the employment context” (Westwood & Lok 2003, p. 161). However, Hanser (2002) who investigated change in China through economic reforms, social change and work practice patterns, did perceive a paradigm shift in work aspirations and expectations. Hanser (2002) concluded that work no longer had to be a patriotic contribution but something that gave personal satisfaction, autonomy and mobility. The trade-off for more personal control however was a loss of job stability and government welfare and the corollary being a new role for education in enabling the development of lifelong skills.

The Peoples’ Daily Online (‘China has socialist market economy in place’ 2005) reported that Minister of the National Development and Reform Commission Ma Kai had said, “by the end of 2004, more than 50 percent of the nearly 3,000 state-owned or state-controlled large major enterprises had turned into stock-sharing companies. Meanwhile, the booming private sector has provided four-fifths of new job opportunities and generated one-third of GDP”. With the new and diverse forms of economic entities, new forms of employment began to evolve. Hence part-time, temporary and seasonal jobs, work on an hourly basis and jobs with flexible working hours, have all become important avenues for the expansion of employment (Xinhua 2004) and have affected people’s meaning and valuing of work.

#### **4.4 Effect of reforms on graduate employment**

Since 1978 China has been moving from a centrally planned to a market oriented economy. In 1994 the Company Law was promulgated in China, which permitted state owned enterprises to be corporatised. The result for the managing cadres was often immediate wealth and a growing interest in entrepreneurial activities and capitalism. While businesses still operate within a rigid framework of strict socialist control, “the economic influence of non-state managers and enterprises has been steadily increasing” (AustCham Beijing 2007c). Moreover, their influence in hiring and firing and the

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<sup>21</sup> Guaranteed employment

associated need for the skills and processes of Human Resource Management has increased. The chapter will now examine the general skill situation in China and the educational requirements of one professional organisation of accountants.

#### 4.4.1 Workforce needs

There is an historical context to the large surplus of labour with an unbalanced skills profile in China. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the workforce can be divided into three levels and three stages of development. At the lower level are operators, the middle level are highly skilled workers, and the upper level is management. In the early development stage, the workforce comprised mainly lower level workers. In the second and third stages because of the shortage of highly skilled workers the emphasis has been on fostering their development. “A sample survey in 2002 found that 54.6 per cent of the workforce was either unskilled or low-skill workers; only 4.4 per cent were seen as highly skilled workers. Upper management accounted for 15.9 per cent, showing that the workforce needed more highly skilled workers” (MLSS & ILO 2004, p. 29).

Hence the Ministry of Labour and Social Security planned to nurture the development of 300,000 highly skilled workers over the following three years. The approach was to involve all stakeholders; enterprises had a major role to play in training workers, and closer links between enterprises and technical and vocational training schools were to be forged to ensure that industry needs were incorporated into training programs.

Several other measures designed to promote the development of highly skilled workers included organizing skills competitions to promote the value and status of skilled workers; improving the national qualifications system to recognize and certify skills; establishing a mechanism to facilitate the exchange of skilled workers to gain experience; and promoting greater investment in training (MLSS & ILO 2004, p. 29).

The relevance of this plan is its clarification that businesses and vocational training schools had a responsibility to work together, but it does not mention employability issues for university graduates.

Whereas expatriate Chinese managers and technicians have benefited from the employment opportunities created by FOEs (Ying, Webber & Wang 2002, p. 97), the benefit for university graduates is unknown. Unlike SOEs, FOEs recruit directly using public advertising, introductions from employment agents, local labour bureaus, individuals who are already working in FOEs and ‘intellectual exchange centres’ which are employment agencies for professional workers (Ying, Webber & Wang 2002, p. 98). These methods require applicants to differentiate themselves; knowing how to connect their skills to the particular business needs and culture could be an advantage. In 1999

national employment in FOEs as a proportion of total employment was relatively small compared with employment in SOEs and collective-owned enterprises, but this has been changing. At that time, employees in FOEs were often younger, more educated and earned more than those in SOEs where non-wage benefits could comprise much of the income. Employees tended to stay within SOEs, but movement of employees, usually between FOEs, was higher.

#### 4.4.2 Skills professional bodies require

There are many professional bodies in China, but for the purposes of this study which examines graduates with Business degrees a number of whom will specialise in Accounting, the Chinese Institute for Certified Public Accountants (CICPA) will be examined. CICPA is affiliated with the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC). In 2003 there were 67,000 practicing CPAs and over 70,000 non-practicing CPAs in China. At that time, the CPA program was available in 22 colleges and universities (Chinese Institute of Certified Public Accountants 2006) and while it is growing, it is one measure of the traditional separation between education and business organisations.

The CICPA charter (2004, p. 1) promotes behaviours such as “the construction of professional credibility and integrity”, a professional image that is “independent, objective and impartial” and a goal to “safeguard the public interests conscientiously, and strive to make due contribution to the accomplishment of the grand objectives of establishing [an] improved socialist market economic system and achieving the overall construction of a well-off society”. Furthermore, its ‘30 Guiding Opinions’ (China Law & Practice 2002) suggest ways of developing the profession, including supporting higher education through financial assistance and benchmarking/evaluation. CICPA urges colleges and universities offering the CPA program to improve their teaching quality through incentives, competition and the annual selection of outstanding students from the CPA program for internship in overseas international accounting firms. These are students who both perform well academically and enjoy ‘moral integrity’<sup>22</sup>. Finally, CICPA supplies students from the CPA program to local large and medium-sized accounting firms for internships and facilitates students joining the CPA profession (CICPA 2006.)

Relevant to this research has been the CPA competency framework to guide ‘talent cultivation’. This links to the “30 Guiding Opinions” to cultivate professional talents, knowledge, expertise, attitudes and ethics that would meet the needs of the reformed SOEs in the context of globalisation. The document serves to guide CPA education, examination and training. CICPA (2006, p. 1) asserts that:

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<sup>22</sup> Author’s note: What this means and how it is assessed is not stated.



efforts will be made to upgrade professional quality, practicing capability and professional ethics of the practicing CPAs and develop high-profile professional talents and managers of accounting firms that are competent for international engagements and capable of meeting requirements of the internationalization of the profession.

IFAC documents have possible implications for higher education curricula that could be customised and localised for different contexts. The IFAC Education Committee discussion paper (International Federation of Accountants 1998) clearly views practical professional experience and education as vital in the context of globalisation of businesses, enhanced reliance on new information technologies and the expansion of services accountants. It recognises that member bodies may have different approaches, that explicit and relevant guidance can improve practical experience for employers and students; that practical experience environments need to be assessed for suitability; and finally that the experience gained by students should be assessed. A later paper on what it means to be a competent accountant (International Federation of Accountants 2003, p. 13) defined competence in terms of workplace outcomes (which can be quite specific) and transferable capabilities (which tend to be more general). Capabilities may be categorised in various ways. IFAC's International Education Guideline (IEG) 9 used six categories (see Table 22) (IFAC 2003, p.3):

**Table 15 Categorisation of capabilities according to IFAC's International Education Guideline 9**

Attitudes	functional skills
behavioral skills	technical knowledge
broad business perspective	intellectual abilities

These are expanded under the headings of knowledge, skills and professional values in IFAC's Appendix 6 (2003, p. 43) as shown in Table 23.

**Table 16 Details and examples of IFAC's Capability categories**

#### **Appendix 6. Categories of Capabilities**

IEG 9 refers to capabilities as "knowledge, skills and professional values." Most of the capabilities identified in the documentation reviewed for this Discussion Paper can be summarized as follows:

##### **Knowledge**

*General knowledge*, for example history, arts and science.

*Organizational and business knowledge*, for example economics, management and quantitative methods.

*Information technology*.

*Accounting and accounting related knowledge*, for example financial accounting, auditing, taxation and so on.

##### **Skills**

*Analytical and constructive cognitive skills*, for example, accessing knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. These refer to the skills in Bloom's taxonomy, which are necessary for problem and task identification, information gathering and organization, analysis and interpretation (including critical, logical and independent thinking and judgment/decision

making).

*Technical skills*, including generic skill such as literacy, numeracy and IT proficiency, as well as skills specific to accounting tasks.

*Personal skills*, for example initiative, influence and self-learning.

*Interpersonal skills*, for example oral and written communication, negotiation, leadership, team work and political acumen.

*Organizational skills*, for example strategic planning, project management, self-management and management of people and resources.

**Professional Values**

*Ethical behavior*, for example independence, objectivity, confidentiality and integrity.

*Professional demeanor*, for example due care, timeliness, courteousness, respect, responsibility and reliability.

*Pursuit of excellence*, for example commitment to continuous improvement and commitment to life-long learning.

*Social responsibility*, for example awareness and consideration of the public interest.

It was noted that member bodies may want to augment these with items of their own choosing such as analytical skills, problem solving skills, information technology skills, personal skills, interpersonal and communication skills, working with others and improving own learning and performance, leadership, business planning and organizational skills. For example, the American Institute of CPAs (AICPA) has a framework of three core competencies for entry into the accounting profession:

**Functional Competencies** which are Decision Modelling, Risk Analysis, Measurement, Reporting, Research, Leverage Technology to Develop and Enhance Functional Competencies.

**Broad Business Perspective Competencies:** Strategic/Critical Thinking, Industry/Sector Perspective, International/Global Perspective, Resource Management, Legal/Regulatory Perspective, Marketing/Client Focus, Leverage Technology to Develop and Enhance a Broad-based Business Perspective.

**Personal Competencies:** Professional Demeanour, Problem Solving and Decision Making, Interaction, Leadership, Communication, Project Management, Leverage Technology to Develop and Enhance Personal Competencies (IFAC 2003, p. 37)

In addition to the IEGs there are International Education Standards (IES) developed and promoted by the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC). Their purpose according to Needles (2005) is to facilitate the globalisation of the accounting profession through a quality assured and consistent framework in global accounting education. IFAC supports professional accounting education programmes that cover advanced accounting knowledge, the complex and changing context and technological developments. The IES skills are IES 1: *Entry Requirements to a Programme of Professional Accounting Education*, IES 2: *Content of Professional Accounting Education Programmes*, IES 3: *Professional Skills*, IES 4: *Professional Values, Ethics and Attitudes*, IES 5: *Practical Experience Requirements*, IES 6: *Assessment of Professional Capabilities and Competence*. IES 3 recognises that while many capabilities are transferable across environments differences emerge in cultures, social expectations and national legislations (Needles 2005, p. 126). IES 6 has a very traditional focus especially in developing countries which often use standardised examinations, and there has been some discussion about broadening the range of competences assessed.

It is therefore apparent that professional capabilities are well documented in the accounting profession and the national professional bodies work with tertiary institutions to ensure courses prepare graduates to be work-ready. While the International Federation of Accountants is very active, CICPA is also increasingly active in Chinese tertiary institutions and demonstrates that in one profession Chinese tertiary curricula and business organisations are building links.

#### **4.5 Employer-Employee Relationships: HRM and Personnel Practices**

The importance an organisation places on graduate attributes can be related to its HRM and Personnel practices. These practices are key components in the unique culture of an organisation which acts to provide structure, facilitate commitment and guide employee's actions and behaviours. The role of HRM is to maximise the potential of individuals whereas personnel practices are mostly limited to processes and procedures such as payroll. Along with the daily effect of organisational 'climate' or morale (Denison 1996, p. 624), organisational culture can play a role in hiring staff and the attitudes and values adopted by employees.

According to Furnham (2005, p. 56) "Human resources or personnel management is the application of psychological and management science principles in an organisation" while Rudman asserts that HRM is "all the concepts, strategies, policies and practices which organisations use to manage and develop the people who work for them" (2002, p. 3). HRM's relevance to this thesis is that "...such factors as national culture, (company) ownership structures, labour markets, the role of the state and trade union organisations" are embedded within HRM (Sparrow, Brewster & Harris 2004, p. 31), it can reflect "society's values and priorities" as well as be a "driving force for change" (Nankervis, Chatterjee & Coffey 2006, p. 4). Therefore, identifying Chinese HRM practices may assist with identifying some of the important external influences on educational and business strategies and practices.

In China, according to the China Enterprise Directors Association (CEDA), the HR Department formulates the personnel management regulations and approaches and is responsible for recruitments, organisational structure, personnel allocation, technical position recruitment and assessments, as well as performance assessment, training, personnel file management and management for retired personnel (China Enterprise Confederation/China Enterprise Directors Association n.d.). These functions differ slightly from Furnham's (2005, p. 56) six primary functions of human resources. However the first function is common and immediately relevant to graduating students in China and in Australia:

- Planning, recruitment and selection, and other issues around staffing the organisation
- Training and development of staff at all levels;

- Ascertaining and monitoring all aspects of compensation, namely pay and conditions;
- Issues around safety and health in the workplace;
- Understanding and implementing employee and labour relations; and
- Research, such as climate / culture surveys, and benchmarking with other companies.

Debates about HRM debates often include such issues as “whilst globalisation and international trade and finance may place substantial pressure on firms to standardise practices and policies ... local customs, institutions, and labour forces do, however, provide serious constraints on the degree of convergence, and may well lead to increasing levels of divergence” (Rowley & Benson 2000, p. 91). Such debates, it is interesting to note, are not vastly different to educational debates about what it means to internationalise, be it curriculum or business practices. In Australian education the debate is also how to maximise the education export dollar, foster research and produce graduates who are widely employable; for transnational education this might lead to a convergence of practices, though the idea of a blending (fusion) is probably more culturally acceptable to Chinese HEIs. At the same time, the aim is to deliver quality education that is meaningful and relevant to those involved, which suggests a degree of localisation; this may mean divergence of educational practices, but in more likelihood a range of approaches will be adopted.

Indeed HRM and educational issues are similar. As with educational practices, Warner and Joynt (2002) note that cross-cultural transferability of HRM practices differs from context to context, often tied to economics and industrial development. FOEs tend to have greater autonomy in recruitment, selection and dismissal, and in SOEs and COEs “nepotistic practices are widespread and institutionalised” (Ying, Webber & Wang 2002, p. 102). Therefore, to achieve international competitiveness, and partly as a result of Western management schools developing joint teaching arrangements with Chinese universities, human resource management ideas have been adopted then modified in many FOEs and copied by Chinese firms. Nankervis et al. (2006, p. 2) argue that factors such as regional and national history, politics, culture and societal values limit a universalist approach to the HRM practices of “HR planning, dynamic organisational structures, rightsizing, flexible employment conditions, cooperative industrial relations, teamwork, performance-based reward systems, and HR accountability”. If there is no universal HRM approach, then identifying what might be termed the Chinese employability skills, as opposed to western graduate attributes, is of value.

To avoid over-generalising, context is important. The behaviour of the employer or department can be influenced by powerful institutional rewards and punishments (Furnham 2005, p. 17). Or, as Davis-Blake and Pfeffer (1989) argue: organisational settings are more influential in shaping, disciplining and socialising individuals than individual personality traits and abilities. These ideas

provide a context for the management research discussed below and for the analysis of structure and agency in Chapter Five.

Austria (1997) expressed concern that notions of Chinese style resulted from non-Chinese people focusing on exaggerated exotic differences. She argued that Chinese businesses are developing a universal management style and new ‘modern management’ practices related to selection, promotion and the use of teams; the implication is that different practices have existed. Some constants are also noted: strategic decision making remains a top level, inner circle, role and relationships are managed in subtly different ways. Austria (1997) highlights political, economic and social influences which in Singapore, at least, have led to the importation and re-combination of aspects of management styles from multinational companies. In other words, management styles evolve to suit local societal needs. With a growing presence of multinational and global companies in China, research on management of multicultural workforces has expanded and “recent attention has been drawn to the particular problem of cultural differences in work motivation as well as the influence of national culture on work values” (Furnham 2005, p. 733).

Several business researchers (Zheng, Soosay & Hyland 2006; Zhu 2005) have suggested a human resource management paradigm shift within multinational companies in Asia to talent management to overcome skilled labour shortages and enhance competitiveness, especially in the manufacturing and service sectors (Zheng, Soosay & Hyland 2006). The result is more strategic staffing, training, recruiting and retaining of talent. The implication for new graduates looking for employment is that those developing the employability skills that Zheng et al. (2006) identified as necessary to improve company performance - such as multiskilling, self management, planning, interpersonal relationships, use of technology and job-related technology - should find employment more readily. Their analysis indicates greater need for improving specific management skills in Tiger economies (the newly developed industrialised Asian countries<sup>23</sup>) than in the Dragon economies of the more economically advanced Asian countries<sup>24</sup> (see Table 24). Unfortunately, Chinese companies in China were not part of the survey sample.

**Table 17 Employability skills in Tiger economies**

% of MNCs indicated	Tigers (N= 318)		Dragons (N= 211)	
	<i>Manufacturing</i>	<i>Service</i>	<i>Manufacturing</i>	<i>Service</i>
<i>Specific abilities and capabilities required:</i>				
Management	90.8	83.8	80.5	80.7
Interpersonal	85.3	76.4	76.0	76.8

<sup>23</sup> Defined as high sustained growth due to export focused trade strategies (Zheng, Soosay & Hyland 2006, pp. 1-2).

<sup>24</sup> Defined as rapid economic growth (Zheng, Soosay and Hyland 2006, p. 2).

Planning	90.2	79.2	70.0	70.1
New technology	84.7	73.7	79.7	70.4
Self-management	71.6	68.0	62.9	71.6
Multi-skilling	75.5	56.9	60.3	63.5
Teamwork	70.8	61.5	65.3	55.2
Job-related Technical skill	76.2	63.6	80.3	56.3
<b><i>Demand for more managers &amp; professionals:</i></b>				
Past	50.3	47.8	51.7	37.7
Future	37.7	47.2	43.8	34.4
<b><i>Experienced recruitment difficulty:</i></b>				
Past	59.1	50.3	59.6	45.1
Future	50.9	46.5	58.4	49.2

Source: Zheng, Soosay and Hyland 2006, p.6 Table 2: Data Analysis Results: Comparison of Tigers and Dragons.

From the perspective of the current study, Chinese graduates who wish to be employed in China need to be aware of traditional ideologies and cultural influences and be prepared to work with hierarchical organisational structures; paternalistic leadership styles; long-standing relationships, complicated networks and collectivist employee behaviours. If the Chinese graduate has an Australian qualification, then expectations about performance review, remuneration, career development and promotional systems may not be realised and “processes such as human resource planning, objective employee selection, experiential learning, industrial relations negotiations, and performance-based rewards systems” (Nankervis et al. 2006, p. 4) may have different characteristics from those described in western textbooks or experienced in a western workplace.

Tang and Ward (2003) argue that in state enterprises rules around management style, delegation and rationality adopted to imitate international practice, have only been successful when implemented with distinctive Chinese characteristics. More importantly, Chinese societal attitudes have directly influenced business operations leading to specific Chinese preferences regarding non-antagonistic communication, maintenance of face, ‘harmony-in-hierarchy’ (Bond & Hwang 1986), trust of insiders over outsiders, reliable and permanent relationships and obligations, dispute settlement based on reasonableness, rather than legality, and negotiations. Hence an outsider may not understand why a Chinese business meeting is dominated more by speeches than open discussion and may also report that Chinese managers concentrate on promoting relationships, whereas Western managers concentrate on task performance. Crombie (2005, p. 110) advises “the negotiation process needs to include time for long term personal and national goals to be balanced against short term personal gain”. While managerial positions are increasingly being advertised and selection criteria used, the wording can include uniquely Chinese criteria such as: “political correctness and moral rectitude, managerial capabilities, hard work, and record of achievements... [T]he ability to maintain

harmonious relations” (Tang & Ward 2003, p. 80). Crombie (2005, p. 142) also argues that: “Managers should be chosen not for their technical ability but for their ability to develop relationships”.

In comparing HRM practices in urban China, Zhu (2006 cited in Nankervis & Chatterjee 2008, p. 15) concluded that adoption of global practices differed according to industry type, particularly for SOEs and FIEs, but that many similarities existed:

...more FIEs than SOEs implemented such ‘transactional’ HRM functions as human resource planning (51% cf 33%), formal recruitment and selection processes (70% cf 64%), job analysis (55% cf 45%), performance appraisal (55% cf 41%), human resource development (50% cf 40%). Conversely, more SOEs had employee record-keeping functions (74% cf 71%), and organised ‘political studies’ (57% cf 48%).

The study also noted that both organisational types do not seem “to undertake fundamental HRM activities such as HR planning, staffing, job design, performance review and HRD” yet generally differences were less than expected (Nankervis & Chatterjee 2008, p. 15). Nankervis and Chatterjee’s (2008, p. 16) data infers some “convergence in the adoption of ‘standard’ HRM practices amongst the SOEs, and possibly that FIEs are adapting their practices to suit local contexts”. This is supported by their finding (2008, p. 16) that:

both types of organisation displayed a strong ‘relational’ orientation, in keeping with the historical and ideological underpinnings of Chinese management – 55% of SOEs and 56% of FIES placed emphasis on ‘employee welfare, recreation and sports’ activities. Not normally an important component of Western HRM practice, except perhaps for valuable executives and selected senior managers, but a key platform of SOE practice in former times.

The relevance of organisation ownership is also reinforced in the “commitment” literature which explores the benefits of employee loyalty. Lin (1998) and Zheng, Morrison and O’Neill (2006) demonstrated that employee commitment was a strong emphasis in Asian-owned businesses, particularly those developed through close family members.

Likewise the leadership literature recognises the influence of organisation ownership and structure, building on broad notions that common communication patterns between managers and workers originate from certain systems of thought which in turn stem from specific systems of authority. “The Asian [leadership] tradition originated as a sense of reciprocal social obligation, collective agency and in-group harmony, discouraging debate and fostering holistic thinking... while the famous Chinese inventions such as paper, gunpowder and so on stem from a system of pragmatic action coupled with

philosophy” (Gao, Arnulf & Kristoffersen 2008, p. 7). Significantly, Gao et al. (2008, p. 7) found that “these differences are integrated in early psychological development, and are likely to affect leadership on issues such as authority, spoken exchange and intellectual efforts on behalf of the organization”. The effect is uncertain; maybe “a developing Chinese economy towards rule-based governance will reduce the impact of relational loyalty such as guanxi” (Gao, Arnulf & Kristoffersen 2008, p. 7).

#### **4.5.1 Recruitment and selection**

Organisational behaviours are not universal. There are many aspects of business that are culture-specific such as ideas of fairness and justice, allocation of rewards, motivating factors, stress factors, use of groups and teams and leadership styles (Furnham 2005, p. 608). From the definitions used in this thesis, these would be employability skills but not necessarily those expected of a new graduate. At the process level of selection there are similarities due to legislative practices and policies that have an “homogenizing effect” (Furnham 2005, p. 610).

For a Chinese graduate looking for a job, family management means that researching an organisation’s background is critical and often difficult: organizational charts and job titles are not necessarily a reliable guide to determining the decision makers, decision making responsibilities can be poorly defined and lack transparency, and job descriptions may be vague. “Hiring decisions are often based simply on personal recommendations, with background checks consisting merely of phone calls ... to close friends or trustworthy contacts. In traditional Chinese businesses, a potential employee’s personal reputation is infinitely more valuable than a formal record of achievements...” (Chen 2001, p. 32). It is possible that with the complexities surrounding the various Chinese business models, a greater range of employability skill sets are needed in China than in Europe and Australia.

Peppas and Yu (2005), as mentioned in Chapters Two and Five, identified a lack of research about current hiring practices in mainland China. Their study compared Chinese and US employer ratings of specific attributes and Chinese students’ perceptions of the same attributes. In particular, from the list of 26 job selection attributes originally developed by Hafer and Hoth (1981) “statistically significant differences were found between the mean ratings of the Chinese students and the Chinese employers for 11 attributes and between the Chinese students and US employers for 15 attributes” (Peppas and Yu 2005, p. 86). The Chinese student sample nominated loyalty, self-confidence, oral communication, enthusiasm and punctuality as most important; Chinese employers put motivation, initiative, knowledge of the company, leadership and loyalty; the US employers ranked enthusiasm, initiative, motivation, oral communication and disposition at the top. There was no mention of modesty, but Smith and Wang (1996) argued that there was a traditional Chinese tendency of responding in the middle range when ranking the strength of a statement.



Modesty also relates to framing individual achievement, another culturally laden concept about which both the employer and graduate need to be aware. The realisation of personal potential is valued for its contribution to the growth of the company and the pride it can bring to the family (Chen 2001, p. 70). “Even when Chinese do adopt Western management and strategy practices, they are likely to apply their own style, one of the most salient features of which is low-key behaviour” (Chen 2001, p. 104). They “tend to deflect attention from the self to preserve harmony and balance, whether this means finding subtle or less offensive ways of saying no, giving credit to others, or contextualizing individual accomplishments in a wider, long-term frame” (Chen 2001, p. 104). This cultural value will impact on how the employer views both the graduate’s job application and, as the low profile approach carries into dress codes, the interview, if there is one. This research will examine the employers’ perceptions of appropriate behaviours for new employee such as being patient, modest and discrete. All cultures have an understanding of the need to promote one’s self, but there are different ways of making the point and different interpretations of what is acceptable.

A skill not mentioned by Peppas and Yu (2005) is the ability to negotiate. Perhaps it is not regarded by employers or graduates as appropriate or relevant at the job selection stage or perhaps it is considered too sophisticated for new graduates. Yet it is a skill used to a greater or lesser extent, either consciously or intuitively, and is intrinsic to the graduate attributes of Australian universities. A new graduate from Victoria University would be expected to employ negotiation strategies in order to solve problems relating to professional practice, to work effectively in a team, to deal with social and cultural diversity and certainly when challenging the opinions of others. Negotiation skills are not taught as a process but rather as an interpersonal skill that encourages critical thinking and logic in an oral setting. The end result may be a harmonious compromise or there may be tension; knowing which is more appropriate for the setting would be a useful employability skill.

In the business world the process of negotiation can be an advanced employability skill and is likely to have a formal as well as informal component. Stark, Fam, Waller and Tian (2005) believe that a better understanding of the current Sino-Western negotiation process could enhance business relationships and help western (New Zealand) businesses capitalise on the growing Chinese consumer market. Ulijn, Rutkowski, Kumar and Zhu (2005) deconstructed the negotiation process further and explored the emotions and national culture of negotiators and the resultant behaviours; their premise being that emotions motivate behaviour, shape negotiator expectations, and create a climate that may be either conducive to or an inhibitor of successful negotiations.

## 4.6 Summary

This chapter proposed a variety of influences on business and educational development in China and suggested a number of ways to explain what is happening. Some obvious changes have occurred

since the hierarchical decision making of a socialist economy when responsibilities within the bureaucracy shifted regularly, manpower training and job assignment were not well coordinated; and the curricula did not produce the graduates with the skills needed by society (Zhang 1998, p. 263). Now, “regardless of the type of enterprise, the general trend is toward a clearer definition of ownership, greater separation between owners and managers, and a movement away from a purely social organization toward a socioeconomic or largely economic entity” (Chen 2001, p. 162). Chen (2001, p. 177) argues that successful businesses in China need to combine service and profit.

The cross cultural and communication studies analysed suggest that Confucian ideas persist and Hofstede’s (2004) comparative study of perceived goals of successful business people showed that the national component in goals is robust and unlikely to disappear. Therefore goal conflicts between leaders from different countries, and between expatriate leaders and their local personnel, are predictable. The cautionary note is that some management practices are not attributable to Chinese values but to how industry is controlled and to the system of state ownership.

Developing skills that are important to employers in China, such as negotiation and maintaining face, are a reason for internationalising the curriculum, at least for VU’s Chinese B Bus graduates who could then promote their embryonic or even established skills to employers in China. However, before they can do this they need to be aware of the value of the skill for the specific context, and the curriculum needs to allow students to discuss, practice and implement the complex components of each skill in a realistic setting. Employers could also be educated so that the skill is investigated as part of the selection process.

A final comment concerns the language used when writing about business practices and characteristics that might be deemed Chinese. In the paragraph below there are terms and ideas that have occurred repeatedly in the literature reviewed in this chapter. Some have been highlighted:

excellent leadership emanates from knowing and observing a complex ethical code, more often than not explicitly based on Confucian teaching. The managers often noted that this is something more than a mere list of virtues: “*The nature of virtuous leadership is complex and multifaceted.*” These values were praised as keys to success both in historical examples and in the autobiographies of modern-day business heroes. The most frequently cited virtues by the managers were: Act as moral role model (by far the most important), Kindness, Trustworthiness, Benevolence, Learning, Harmonious relationships, Obedience, Filial piety, Righteousness, Collectivism, Loyalty, Persistence, Selflessness, and Wisdom (Gao et al. 2008, p. 12).

Without labouring the point, the language itself shows different emphases between Australia and China.

HRM theories inform the current study as graduating students now apply for jobs, in a dynamic market-driven environment, requiring knowledge about selection processes that is not general or common, with business structures and processes that may not be comprehensible or comprehensive. Furthermore, the decision regarding the graduating student's employability involves a complex interplay of an organisation's culture and other factors determining behaviour and decision making by the employing person or team. Job choice by the graduate and selection by the employer may be constrained by social, economic and political factors plus ability, age and education, which can be modified further by personal attributes, skills and interests. The next chapter will examine methodological approaches for this thesis.

## Chapter Five Methodology

### 5.0 Introduction

This thesis aims to examine employer perceptions and priorities for specific characteristics when employing new graduates in China by addressing the following research question: *What qualities and skills does a Chinese graduate with an Australian Bachelor of Business need for employment in China?* The question is operationalised through a focus on what is and is not developed in the curriculum:

1. What characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills being developed in the B Bus curriculum are particularly valued by Chinese employers?
2. What characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills are valued by Chinese employers but not developed or included in the B Bus curriculum?

The research requires a framework for understanding the Chinese workplace that Bachelor of Business graduates are entering, such as state-owned enterprises, small to medium sized Chinese owned businesses and multinational corporations. Therefore it must also assess the attitudes and values of employers with probably differing goals and outlooks - depending on the type of business - to employers in Australia. In analysing these attitudes it is important to consider the broader political and economic context, such as China's membership of the WTO and social changes in China. The research examines how these have impacted on graduates' preferences for certain jobs and employers' preferences for particular graduate profiles. The hypotheses examine the role of curriculum, how explicitly it develops certain skills, and how environment and teacher dependent it is in developing skills other than content knowledge:

1. If Chinese employers, reflecting Chinese culture in general, value the traditional curriculum, then Chinese graduates of a western curriculum will not meet Chinese employer requirements unless they display appropriate Chinese employability skills.
2. If Chinese employers see the limitations of a wholly traditional curriculum; that is, they want a partially western one, then there will be some skills that they perceive as important in the western curriculum.
3. If Chinese lecturers were teaching the curriculum with the skills required by the Chinese workplace in mind, then the perceptions of Chinese lecturers and Chinese employers regarding certain skills and qualities will be similar.
4. If Australian universities have graduate attributes embedded in curricula that are not relevant in China, then Chinese lecturers and Chinese students will perceive these skills as less important; and

5. If students completing the VU Bachelor of Business in China or in Melbourne aim to find work in China, then they will similarly value the same skills and qualities.

This chapter considers the possible research paradigms that could provide a lens for exploring the research questions and the conceptual model presented in 5.1. Social phenomena research issues, socially constructed meaning, the use of Adaptive Theory as a method of analysis and the extant theories of power, education and culture are highly pertinent as they help the researcher understand her own perspective as well as ensure other ways of knowing are considered.

## 5.1 Internationalised graduate attributes conceptual model

Johnston (2003) has critically reviewed some of the graduate employment research and categorises it as follows:

- a. Large-scale statistical analyses of graduate experiences, mostly from surveys;
- b. Large-scale statistical collections of official national UK statistics with some commentary;
- c. Economic analyses of graduate employment;
- d. Conceptual analyses;
- e. Employers' perceptions of their needs and accounts of their recruitment practices;
- f. Studies combining theoretical explanations with empirical investigation;
- g. Careers-based investigations; and
- h. Studies of professional socialisation and learning.

Johnston (2003) sees merit in many of the studies, particularly with the patterns and trends presented, but is critical of the lack of cross referencing between theoretical texts, related empirical studies, analyses and peer-reviewed literature. She also argues that the positivist paradigm often used is assumed to give value-free decisions and responses and the resulting quantitative data manipulated to fit the desired statistical tests. Furthermore the interpretations of these tests are limited to saying what is happening, not the why and how. Johnston (2003, p. 421) also notes researchers who draw “complex” conclusions from “simplistic” survey data such as Harvey and Green (1994) and Brennan et al. (2001): “The answers are reliant on uncorroborated employer or graduate judgements, their interpretation of the terms used in the questionnaire, and how they happened to feel on the day they completed the questionnaire” (Johnston 2003, p. 422). Her point is that to reach any meaningful insight requires longitudinal plus investigative qualitative data with more contextualisation and triangulation of responses.

Redding (2005, p. 124) supports the need for relevant, comprehensive, contextualised qualitative analysis which

gains in explanatory significance with a fuller than usual acknowledgement of (a) the realm of 'meaning', (b) the roles of interest groups, and (c) the impacts of history; that just as economic action is embedded in institutions, they are in turn embedded in meaning or rationale, these latter being essentially cultural, and so societal. ... the pursuit of understanding, via thick description, is a necessary counter-weight to the pursuit of proof via positivism, the latter being too often de-contextualised. ... complex description... can contain accessible patterns of determinacy and predictive power. ...in qualification of the previous point, an entirely determinist argument is inappropriate, and needs to be balanced by the inclusion of human and organisational agency. The complexity of explanation that flows from these requirements is obvious, and becomes the core challenge

Moreover he argues that all our knowledge is culturally driven, restricted further by personal limitations, and that data can only be gathered inferentially through various indirect manifestations:

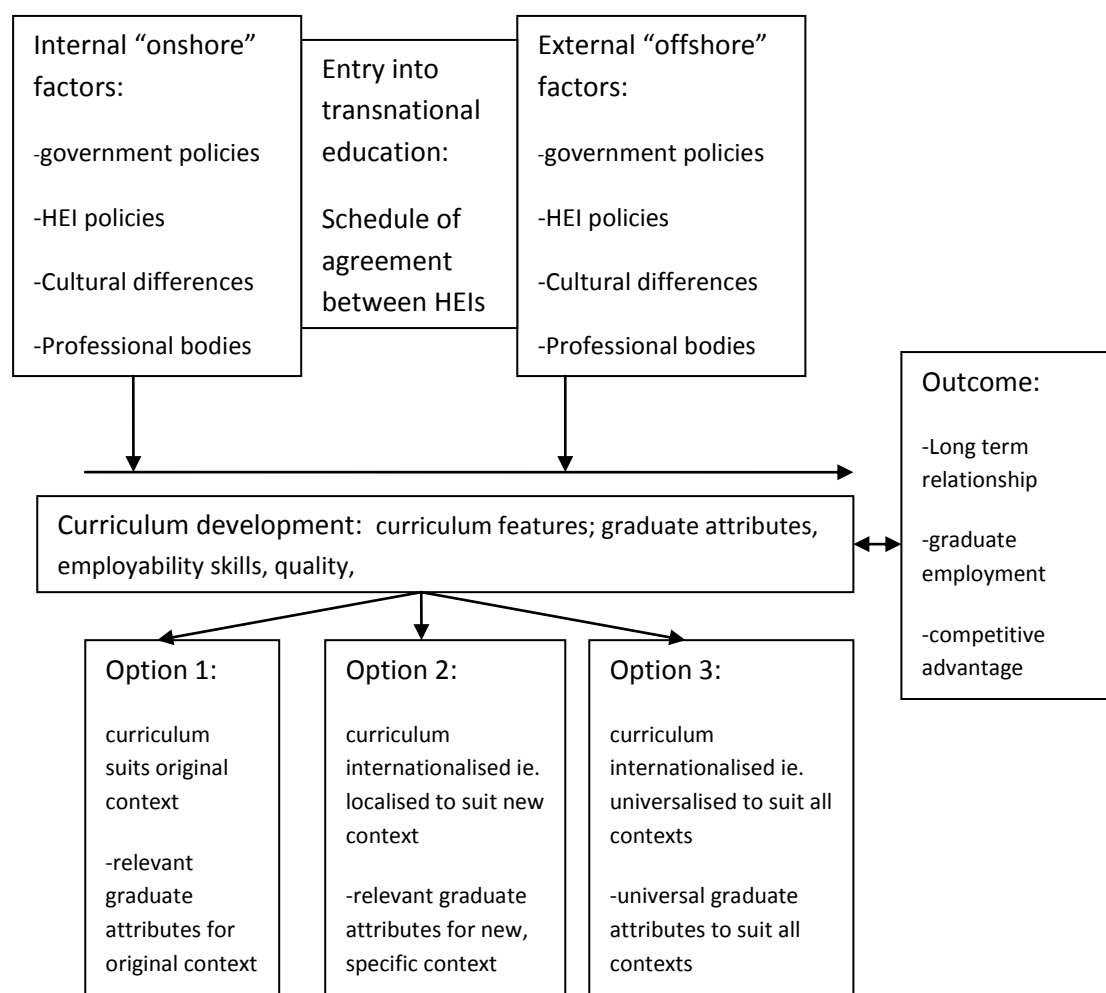
man is an animal suspended in 'webs of significance' he has spun. Culture is those webs, and the analysis of it is not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning (Geertz 1973, p. 5). The second-order nature of the social sciences is nowhere more forcefully stated: the object of study, when the motivation for people's behaviour is the core issue of interest, is the meaning attributed by people to the influences they are subjected to. This can only be seen and understood in their terms, if a realistic comprehension of what is going on is to be achieved (Redding 2005, p. 129).

Therefore the data produced in this study comes from a variety of sources, is being analysed and interpreted with caution, and triangulated in several ways. The researcher's conceptual model is presented in Figure 4. Called the Internationalised Graduate Attributes Conceptual Model (IGACM), it has three distinctive features. Firstly, it is based on a detailed analysis of the educational and business drivers of graduate attributes including political and professional sources. The internal factors influence the creation and development of the curriculum, but external factors also have some influence. The entry strategy into a foreign marketplace may be based on the current or potential curriculum. The decision on what curriculum option is delivered should be made jointly between the two Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Secondly variables are represented as general categories and their interaction with curriculum development will vary. Thirdly, the model posits that curriculum development that includes relevant graduate attributes determines the long term performance.

The model extends the idea of internationalisation of education and the choices involved. It postulates that curriculum change will occur, but knowing where to look for the drivers gives the educators some control. Curriculum development decisions determine graduate outcomes and vice

versa. The IGACM suggests that graduate attributes and employability skills are identifiable, teachable and crucial to the success of a transnational education partnership. The model is premised on the acceptance of competences, attributes, outcomes and discipline based ‘skills’.

**Figure 4 Internationalised Graduate Attributes Conceptual Model (IGACM)**



In contrast to previous studies about identifying and developing graduate attributes that focus only on the general needs of businesses or professional bodies, the IGACM includes government policies, different cultural interpretations and requirements, different business contexts and HR practices. It also suggests that while the influence of external factors cannot be ignored, the focus of the curriculum which is ultimately delivered is an option. Therefore, the IGACM with its key and new components develops a complex and dynamic international graduate attributes contextual framework.

## 5.2 Social phenomena research issues

One of the foci of this thesis is an investigation of the nature of the skills and characteristics that make one Chinese new graduate more employable than another in a particular employment environment.

The employment decision is perceived to be controlled by the employer, but the objective and observable actions of the employer cannot be reliably explored without engaging at an individual level with the subjective interpretation of the actions and situations surrounding the employer. In other words, why the employer acts in a certain way is linked to internal personal factors and external structural factors. Research into social phenomena that study the meaning of human experiences tends to focus on either the ‘agency’ of the phenomena or the ‘structure’ within which it takes place (Waters 1996); both have implications for the methodology of this thesis.

The agency approach emphasises the way in which individuals shape their own identity by thinking and acting independently, hence resulting in different lived experiences and different interpretations of those experiences. Agency is “a relationship that is constantly reconstructed and renegotiated with those around the individual and with the society at large” (Lantolf & Pavlenko 2001, p. 148). According to Giddens (1994), it is a form of analysis that interprets social activity as inter-subjective phenomenon that enables people to produce change. The agency approach can be seen in phenomenological and ethnographic research methods. The criticisms are that it can reduce social life to simply subjective human experience (Layder 1998), result in theories that are idiosyncratic (Eisenhardt 1989) or full of bias (Yin 1984).

By contrast, structural research emphasises the power and influence of social institutions on reasoning individuals by assessing the underlying impinging economic or political factors (Giddens 1984; Giddens). These impinging factors affect an individual’s response. Structural research does not yield its own observable results; results are derived from indirect data which risk being invalid due to unethical use of data, misinterpretation or wrong measure of the variable being analysed (Babbie 2004). Critics of the structural approach (Glaser & Strauss 1967) highlight the lack of engagement with local experience and phenomena, and promoted grounded theory to research personal experiences of a process by considering both agency and structural factors.

Giddens (1984) integrated agency and structure in his structuration theory which allowed for a reflexive coexistence. Hence if graduate attributes were lifelong attributes they would be formed and reformed based on the context. Layder (1994) responded to criticisms of agency and structure by combining these methods into a single approach that links “human activity and its social contexts” and emphasises the multidimensional nature of social arrangements. These social theorists have developed combination approaches which add broader structural contextual analysis to the micro-level agency techniques. Thus their approach provides an opportunity to ascertain the impact of overarching, less controllable factors.

Attempts to overlay agency data with structural factors to overcome the difficulties described above have not been straightforward. Firstly, the approach has been criticised as too theory driven and



methodologically deterministic (Deetz 1996). Secondly, Bhaskar (1978) noted that the agency/structure combination could not explain why people behave differently under the same conditions. Hence Bhaskar (1978) developed the method of critical realism based on the idea that social structures pre-exist the social actions which reproduce and transform them. In China, it is not always apparent whether the structures or actions came first. There is ongoing government control of the educational system, which tends to make it less flexible than the various business systems and the people within more likely to reproduce than transform the systems. Educational, government and business structures and systems contribute to the various agents' perceptions of reality and their subsequent actions; hence structures, perceptions and actions should be considered in the current study.

Regardless of the timing, the social structures form the limits within which social interactions occur and the actors draw from unequally distributed assets. In this way it is possible "to contextualise and explain social interaction by locating it within the broader social structure of which it is part" (Reed 1997, p. 38). Thus any method for institutional research should entail an understanding of social hierarchy, norms and the importance of individual belief systems. At times, in China individual belief systems are exercised cautiously.

Why an employer chooses one graduate in preference to another requires an understanding of both the structural circumstances that shape behaviour as well as an interpretation of the employer's and graduate's behaviours. The next section discusses how individuals (employers, teachers and students) construct meaning and an understanding of their social context. In a Chinese context the socially constructed nature of the relationships between governments (provincial and central), capital and labour, and business entities on the one hand, and employers and the educational system on the other is key to interpreting the data derived from the research undertaken.

### **5.3 The construction of meaning**

Meanings that are socially constructed, whether through relational patterns of discourse or within changing institutional and organisational structures, may restrict people from seeing important aspects of the lived reality of their daily lives. Social constructionism aims to examine how individuals and groups create their perception of reality as an ongoing activity. Therefore the research methodology for this thesis needs to focus on social phenomena. A number of methodologies allow the researcher as an outsider to do this: the philosophical principles of Phenomenology, the ethical and integrative approach of Critical Theory, the cultural comparisons of Ethnology, and the analytical framing and reframing of Adaptive Theory. In each paradigm there is a relationship between the researcher and the subject. If the relationship is distant then the researcher may be more objective but perhaps less

understanding; if the relationship is close then the researcher may have a valuable subjective experience (Babbie 2004, p. 42).

The human science approach of van Manen (1990) allows for interpretation of lived experience in order to see the significance of certain situations and relationships. Hermeneutic phenomenology is a philosophically based human science which looks at the individual as having irreplaceable significance (van Manen 1990, p. 7); it is not an empirical, inductive science but an approach which develops empirical, experientially based, generalisable knowledge, albeit within the limits of the given contextualised framework. In the case of curriculum and the development of skills that assist a new graduate in their first professional position, observation and controlled experimentation do not allow for reflection on the unique experience; in contrast, phenomenological questions about the nature, meaning and significance of certain phenomena do. Adding the term hermeneutic acknowledges there are limitations to the responses both as empirical data and as generalisable information.

Phenomenological data can contribute to identifying emerging theory. Husserl (cited in Stewart & Mickunas 1990, p. 36) argued that the philosopher/researcher had to suspend, or rather acknowledge, previously held theories and analyse the phenomena itself, striving to eventually reach its essence. Glassner (2000) provides an example. He found that combining agency with structure led to a specific construction of meaning for individuals, and demonstrated this through exposure of participants to news media, advertisements, political and other organisations which simultaneously alter both meaning and structural conditions. Adopting a concept such as Graduate Attributes is dependent on the social construction of such attributes by the stakeholders and those directly involved. It is an evolutionary process that builds on the rhetoric brought into the curriculum or workplace by various assessment or professional development activities. The implication for this research is that participants may view certain graduate attributes favourably because of their normalisation and legitimisation within some contexts. This form of social control depends on self regulation of a group (Janowitz 1991) and helps to explain why individuals within an organisation might adapt their values to a dominant social reality, which may appear strange to outsiders (Chikudate 2000). Such behaviour which can be modified by context provides a reason for collecting phenomenological data that allows contextualised values and perceptions to be understood from the perspective of emerging theory.

Luke (2003, p. 104), in making the case for meaningful educational reform that is not simply “neoliberal marketisation, [a] proliferation of outcomes and tests, and piecemeal responses to cultural, linguistic and epistemological diversity that have created a welter of 'add on' and 'pull out' programs”, rejects a reductionist, causal approach preferring various paradigms that draw out the full picture.

Moreover he argues that educational research should inform educational policy as part of comprehensive social policy. For educational research he asserts that:

We need evidence-based social policies derived, *inter alia*, from a critical, hermeneutic social science that draws from a range of disciplinary discourses and fields. Such an approach would provide a more complex, theory-driven analysis, using and triangulating a range of social statistical, demographic, economic, sociological, ethnographic as well as psychometric data sources (Luke 2003, p. 98).

As discussed in Chapter Two, research on Graduate Attributes argues that their development and importance vary with the context. The ‘lived experience’<sup>25</sup>, that is knowing through experience “lived” versus knowledge through other means, of new graduates and employers in the Australian context has been shaped by the patterns of discourse and social interaction that have evolved around graduates being ‘workplace or profession ready’. The *Graduate Employability Skills* (Precision Consultancy 2007) supports the notion of developing, teaching, assessing and reporting such skills but the more recent Bradley report extends the rationale to promote greater social inclusion within the Australian tertiary sector for Australia’s economic and social benefit (Bradley 2008). In a pragmatic manner the report addresses Luke’s aim of developing educational policy from social policy.

This view of workplace readiness has informed the current research method in considering the potential dissonance between expectations, possibilities and realities of the researcher’s hermeneutic that is now understood in a novel situation far removed from the social, political and economical frame of reference of the researcher. The process of understanding the hermeneutic in the new situation leads to changes in understanding. Thus, the challenge is to analyse to what degree western notions about graduate attributes have been currently adopted, localised or customised through employers in China and within the Chinese educational context that has shaped the norms and values of the various actors / stakeholders.

The task in this thesis is to critically evaluate the participants’ responses and relate to broader discussions about the profile of a graduate in China. The following section addresses the method of analysis used in this thesis.

## 5.4 Adaptive theory

Grounded theory uses an information gathering approach for field research in order to verify previous studies (Layder 1993, p. 47). If the emergent theory is then analysed against the general theory and the order and pattern of research into each evolves accordingly, both are evidentially strengthened.

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<sup>25</sup>*Erlebnis* (lived experience) and *Verstehen* (understanding) (Heidegger 1962)

Layder (1998) called this Adaptive Theory and it acknowledges an interdependent, layered model of society: macro context, immediate setting of social activity, 'situated activity' or dynamics of the interaction, the biography of the 'self' (Layder 1993, p. 8). Part of the rationale for this research was to fill gaps in knowledge that reflects the layered complexities of Chinese society by providing locally based Chinese data on the relevance and nature of certain graduate skills in the workplace as perceived by employers, lecturers and students in China.

To describe and interpret graduate attributes from the viewpoint of Chinese students, staff and employers, this research acknowledges the grounded theory underpinning the graduate attributes of Western countries that have a systematically developed tertiary education industry. The limitation of grounded theory to the current study is the inability to develop new hypotheses that, in this case, should assert the importance of the environment. Hence the use of phenomenological techniques as a way of understanding and adaptive theory to cater for the cyclical need for hypothesis testing and refining. Personal experiential descriptions gathered from a hermeneutic phenomenology perspective may occasionally overlap but are unlikely to be identical: participants' responses in this study may not convey the same message yet they result from the same experience. Over time however, "unity" should emerge from a synthesis of all the experiences and perspectives (Stewart & Mickunas 1990, p. 44). Adaptive theory, as outlined below, allows individual differences and similarities to be reviewed then accepted or discarded.

Glaser and Strauss (1967), in an attempt to move away from quantitative methods that tested structural theories in isolation from their social context, developed grounded theory as an approach which reflects the realities of everyday life by emphasizing the subjective ways and processes of interaction which individuals use to construct their social environment (Layder 1993). On the other hand, Merton's 1967 middle-range theory, often used for theory testing rather than theory building, was a more positivist vision of social analysis that inserted data into predetermined categories. It tended "to emphasize the importance of the collective and institutional aspects of society and their impact on the lives of individuals" (Layder 1993, p. 5). Overall, it is a more macro approach and lends itself to more objective, quantitative survey methods. The research for this thesis did not fit comfortably with Merton's theory because the experience of the individual is missing. While Hofstede (2004) has argued that the individual is less important in a Confucian society than the collective, at no point does he say that the individual is irrelevant.

Research into graduate skills has been undertaken elsewhere, but in China it is limited, contentious or inconclusive in relation to the construction of reality and meaning of graduate attributes within the workplace or educational environment. The ability of the Chinese interviewees in this study to critically review and analyse graduate attributes implies an understanding that has not necessarily

come from a western research paradigm. The current research aims to develop a minimally western focus to the theory and hopefully build a more genuine Chinese-located theory; that is, initially theory testing but ultimately theory building.

Grounded theory emphasises the importance of structural analysis and the relation between action and structure. In this research on the role of certain graduate skills and their overlap with employability skills, one hypothesis is that employability skills are a product of the systemic structure, be it organizational, cultural and or political, but in China are still very controlled. The alternative hypothesis is that they are determined by the agent; that is the employer, the graduate or the lecturer. Institutions and face-to-face activities are essentially interdependent; but the extent depends on one's position in the 'critical realist' debate (Reed 1997). In the current situation social conditions and resources cannot be separated from the agents, yet such technical knowledge is not evenly distributed among the employers, lecturers or graduates, so the degree to which it informs and empowers is difficult to ascertain (Layder 1993, p. 66). Layder argues that grounded theory must be extended to include a social reality that values separate and distinctive analyses of both macro sociological phenomena and micro events of face-to-face or situated interaction (Layder 1993, p. 68). Furthermore, in the case of employers employing graduates, the interplay of psychological and personality factors as well as the power and control relations of the social environment affect the behaviour and decisions of both the employer and the graduate.

Layder's 1998 Adaptive Theory best suited the needs of the current research methodology for three reasons. Firstly, theorising against new and prior theories took place throughout the data collection process which has resulted in the development of conclusions strongly located in the empirical evidence. Secondly, there has been an overt appreciation of social-structural aspects of Chinese society. Thirdly, and most significantly, it is acknowledged that the theoretical conclusions of this research are based on current knowledge and understanding which could change.

## 5.5 Extant theories

In this thesis the main theories have been generated from white, male, tenured, middleclass, middle-aged Europeans. The theories of power in society and within the employment relationship are associated with Foucault's (1980) discourse-power analysis, Habermas' (1987) 'theory of communicative action' and Giddens' (1984) 'theory of structuration'. The second extant theory considered is the educational research of teaching and learning of Paulo Freire (1970). The third broad set of theories in this thesis focus on culture, cross cultural communication and culturally specific traits (Hofstede, 1984, 2004). A brief overview follows.

### 5.5.1 Power in society and within the employment relationship

Foucault identifies the power and influence of social discourses as a tool for establishing and distributing meaning. His power-discourse analysis views power as a social construct produced by social discourses. The power acts on a subject positioned in a field of power relations and within a set of social practices (Layder 1994, p. 95). Foucault's three types of power: sovereign (absolute), disciplinary (community restrictions) and biopower (self discipline), shape the discourses that define and facilitate the social practice of individuals. At the same time the agency of individuals shapes their discourses (Foucault 1980). There are clear parallels for this study with the Chinese context: central government holds the sovereign power and Confucian traditions and familial expectations provide community boundaries and strongly influence self imposed personal boundaries.

Habermas has endeavoured to promote democratic socialism and, while he is firmly Eurocentric, his construction of social theory is within a non-oppressive, inclusive framework. He argues that power is controlled by society as a whole, and individuals or institutions are allowed to hold power provided it is used according to the beliefs and attitudes of that society. The exploration of 'lifeworld', which is an individual's cognitive horizon, and 'system' (Habermas 1984; 1988) as an interconnected and stratified social ontology, reveals issues of power, control and ideology. Layder asserts that: "the pervasive influence of power domains of social life cannot be understood properly if its systemic (or structural) aspects are not recognised or registered in the first place" (Layder 1998, p. 4). Habermas' theory requires dialogic, hermeneutic social sciences (Habermas 1998) so that power is located in rational discussion. Hence the need to maximise communicative relationships through interpersonal linguistic structures such as speech, that all people have some competence to achieve. Habermas argues against an over-regulated learning environment which is possibly an anti graduate attributes position. He notes that education should be contributing to one's lifeworld which is potentially a pro graduate attributes position. However, the unknown factor is what lifeworld or autonomy, a common graduate attribute, means in a Chinese context.

However, Habermas' more contemporary view is at odds with Held (1980) who argues that agreement through discourse is unusual without the use of persuasive language. From Held's perspective power is the ability to coerce others to act in ways that maximise communicative outcomes and benefit society, which may accurately reflect the situation in China. This study recognises the restrictions to individual power imposed by group or societal power and the research is framed to explore perceptions<sup>26</sup> within political, economic and social contexts.

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<sup>26</sup> Held (1980) uses the term "lifeworld"

Giddens' (2004) theory of structuration maintains that social life results from both the actions of individuals and social forces. He proposes a relationship between human agency and social structure, such that structure is formed from the repeated acts of individual agents. He argues that people make meaning of their experiences and create social reality from within social settings and furthermore that power is part of the routine actions of every person (Giddens 1994). The social idealist would say this is as relevant in China as elsewhere. However, while routine actions might be powerful, the meaningful question is "what, or even who, makes them routine in China"? In a controlled society, boundaries are created by relatively few powerful agents and penalties exist for crossing them.

### 5.5.2 Educational research

Paulo Freire's educational philosophy focuses on the respectful dialogue that can lead to informal education and more relevant learning than a predetermined curriculum. The process of cooperative dialogue can build community and social capital and develop consciousness in order to create the power to transform reality (Taylor 1993). Freire explored the relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed and how education maintained this division. He argued that meaningful educational activity must be situated in the lived experience of participants. This philosophy links with current curriculum initiatives in China and Australia: some vindicate the oppressors, some bridge the divide. The following examples could bridge the divide: firstly, the recognition that the workplace is a valid place for learning, that it provides relevant learning and that the learning is not limited to outcomes identified in the formal curriculum. Valuable workplace learning could overcome or build *guanxi* required by a graduate. A second bridge could be curriculum that is adequately localised for a cohort of students who are not physically and/or mentally situated in the same supported teaching and learning environment as envisaged by the original curriculum developers (Chang 2008). A third example could be the range of institutional and departmental-level strategies that assist student transition and retention (Leask 2003). The focus on making explicit the hidden, often untaught curriculum, the intertwined social and educational drivers, and the strategies to enhance the First Year Experience (Kift 2008) are part of this example. On a national level, the lived experience of Chinese students in China is still regimented and as a group they are required to conform; as the new educated elite, they may in turn perpetuate the system and become those who oppress. Marginson argues that such an end result in China is similar to that of Australia's educational system which is maintaining an educated elite (2008a).

### 5.5.3 Cross-cultural research

The term 'culture' has a number of definitions. To Stier (2004, p. 1) it is both a cognitive and emotional internalised reference system. It provides a social and individual identity to the extent that if one's culture is criticised, one feels personally criticised. In the context of international education,

cross cultural teaching and learning interactions contain both explicit often behavioural messages and an often implicit essential core of traditional ideas and values that are intangible and deeply embedded in the socially shared customs of a particular group (Groeschl & Doherty 2000). Hofstede (1984; 1991), as discussed in Chapter Three, identified four dimensions of national culture which are termed 'power distance', 'individualism- collectivism', masculinity-femininity, and 'uncertainty avoidance'. Although this research does not use the approach of cultural mapping, some of Hofstede's claims, for example that 'persistence' and 'respect for tradition' are core values of the concept of 'Confucian dynamism', might be observed since all students, lecturers and employers interviewed came from a traditional Chinese background. The limitation of this "large culture" view (Holliday 1999) is the tendency for users to over-generalise with labels. A "small culture" approach, on the other hand, takes into account new contexts constructed by sub-groups; there is a role for personal agency in the relationships and potential for cultural hybridism, the effect of which is to reduce predictability and, hopefully, fewer gross generalisations. Recognising and accepting the limitations of labels is key to this research; as Stier (2004, p. 1) bluntly asserts, arguing from the "cultural prism of social work", we are "to a large extent trapped in our own culture and frame of mind".

## 5.6 Implication of theoretical discussion

These extant theories form the interpretative framework for applying Adaptive Theory to examine the employability skills needed by new graduates entering the Chinese labour market because they are the researcher's personal and educational frame of reference. They are a starting point for understanding, as argued in Chapter One, the social and structural changes which have taken place in the last decade in China. One highly significant structural change is the move from the state to the individual graduate in responsibility for finding employment. This does not mean that the graduate makes the employment decision alone; family connections and responsibilities are major considerations. However, parental expectations and high educational fees are not sufficient to ensure that the resulting qualification leads to the desired employment. Also, achieving high grades does not necessarily develop all the employability skills a new graduate needs to make a successful transition into the anticipated professional workplace. Even possessing all the employability skills needed for a particular job, the graduate may not be successful; there are other agents and structures involved in such decisions.

This research attempts to make explicit the employability profile of a Chinese Business degree graduate. There is no one simple objective lens that will reveal everything. The resulting hermeneutic has to reflect the meanings of the lived experience and from this perspective the value of adaptive theory is that the broad theories are acknowledged but the methodology allows new interpretations and new theory generation. The researcher has to be open minded in order to develop



an understanding and new theory about the relationship between Chinese business practices and the employability skills of new graduates.

## 5.7 Justification for the research perspective

The various disciplines have developed different definitions for concepts such as skills which have resulted in different methodological approaches. Sociologists often look at the social contextualisation of skills within a changing workplace (Wood 1989 cited in Felstead 2002) and, particularly now, the effects of globalisation on organisational and labour market skills. The social construction of the implication of being ‘skilled’ as a form of power is another research focus.

Much of the economics literature has used the human capital approach for understanding what motivates skill development in individuals and organisations (Felstead et al. 2002). This approach aligns skill development with higher productivity, higher wages and better employment opportunities. Such a conceptualisation is limited and data collection tends to be a quantitative compilation of qualifications, other training, years of service and income. Other possible theories can account for observed differences in employment success such as Thurow’s (1975) labour queue theory which argues that graduates of certain courses need less training and hence will be employed before those of other courses who are expected to need more training. Alternatively, credentialist theory is based on the premise that the economic elite protect the better jobs for those who have similar credentials, or qualifications, to them (Allen & van der Velden 2005a).

HRM theory, as mentioned in Chapter Three, is one of the many branches of the social sciences that have adopted a scientific approach. This means that the eight characteristics that Wexley and Yukl (1984) nominated as being essential for a scientific approach should be followed. These are: self-correcting, empirically checked, open to public inspection and repeatable, objectively and statistically valid, controlled and systematic, generate theories that direct future research, test hypotheses, aim to explain, understand, predict and change organisational understanding. For the unknown directions of the Chinese environment this approach for the current study is too rigid.

Psychologists have developed similarly precise techniques for measuring the skill requirements of different types of work plus the skills of individuals (Gael 1988 in Felstead 2002). The technique involves detailed case analyses and the use of tools such as questionnaires. Unfortunately they are often only relevant to specific occupations which for the B Bus graduates of the current study are unknown.

There is no one existing theory that supports a standard list of relevant competencies (Felstead, Gallie & Green 2002; Weinert 2001). Hence Allen, Ramaekers and van der Velden (2005b) argued for the

development of dimensions that combine theory and practical considerations and which used context-neutral action competencies (see Chapter Two). The research perspective adopted for this thesis needs to include both educational and business practices paradigms; a phenomenological perspective using Adaptive Theory accommodates this need. Moreover, as their tool had a labour market focus, it was appropriate to measure both actual and required competencies. The question of when to measure then became important. Measuring competencies at the time of graduation would indicate the actual output of courses, only if there was a pre-entry assessment. However if the competences are meant to reflect the ability of graduates to function in the workplace, then some adjustment period should be allowed. A third measurement would be the shortage or surplus of actual competencies compared to labour market requirements.

Allen, Ramaekers and van der Velden (2005b) also posed the question of ‘how to test?’ Using an assessment centre and experts might reduce measurement error but the validity and expense are negative points. They considered that surveys of workplace supervisors may or may not be returned and thus that the sampling design would be difficult. Self reporting by graduates was viewed favourably because it could be collated with other European data, and could be repeated to give a longitudinal insight into the outcomes of higher education courses, as long as the questions were specific and maybe a glossary included.

## 5.8 Validity and reliability

Whereas Johnson (2003) argued that investigative methods should be used in combination to avoid over-interpretation and Babbie (2004) used ‘triangulation’ for checking the validity and reliability of findings, Layder (1993, p. 108) suggested that a multi-strategy approach to data collection and fieldwork provides flexibility that can cope with the layered, and often indirect and impersonal, nature of social reality; in other words, ‘the unfolding nature of social activity over time and space, and ... the integrated nature of macro and micro features of social life’. According to Layder (1993), this approach has a comprehensive linking and developmental role as well as triangulation, and prevents research that analyses only the macro or micro aspects of social life.

To triangulate the emerging theory, conjoint analysis was considered. Conjoint analysis is an approach to data collection and analysis that has mostly been used for marketing decisions (Green, Krieger & Wind 2001; Green & Srinivasan 1990) and requires participants to judge objects repeatedly with regard to their attractiveness. It developed “from the need to analyze the effects of predictor variables that are often qualitatively specified or weakly measured” (Hair et al. 1995, p. 577) and is based on the premise that the evaluation of a product results from combining the level of importance of each attribute. It has also been used to develop human resource strategies to determine types of rewards that will reduce employee attrition and training costs (Mullich 2005).

The use of Conjoint Analysis (CA) in educational research occasionally occurs within business disciplines. Baker and McGregor (2000) were able to identify from previous research seven characteristics that employers appeared to use to judge accounting graduates in the US. These included: overall marks; accounting marks; communication skills; personal integrity; energy, drive and enthusiasm; and appearance. Baker and McGregor (2000) posed research questions to determine the importance of each to employers, to faculty and to students, to compare the relative importance across the groups and, to determine if hiring preferences could be reliably predicted. Using a Conjoint Analysis approach they created hypothetical student descriptions that posed variations of the seven characteristics within defined levels. The research instrument was mailed to randomly selected individuals on professionally specific databases. The results showed that employers and accounting faculty staff highly valued personal integrity in newly hired graduates, whereas the student group did not. “This and similarly unexpected findings suggested that many accounting students and accounting educators did not know which attributes are most important to potential employers” (Baker & McGregor 2000, p. 149). The result is a not a surprise; the relevance to the current study is whether sufficient data can be collected to undertake this approach to add to the validity and reliability of the findings.

## 5.9 Cultural dilemmas and contextualisation

As Qiu (2000) noted, a network of personal relationships is helpful for successful research in China. However, whether the researcher is an “insider” or, as in this study, an “outsider” possible prejudices and biases as well as personal feelings and experiences can influence both the data collection and the research findings (Gall, Borg & Gall 1996, p. 558). To overcome this possible problem, Borg and Gall (1989) discuss “the weight of accumulated evidence”, while others encourage a “fusion of horizons” by allowing one’s own position to be modified by alternative views (Gadamer 1975; Scott & Usher 1996).

However, the impact of cultural experiences is questionable (Shah 2004, p. 550). How multiple variables shape and define each other and effect cross-cultural interaction is not generalisable. As Shah (2004, p. 552) emphasises the “subjectivities of the research participants” will necessarily influence “the data collection and the process of ‘making meaning’” and “cultural differences have significance for both phases”. While Clarke (2000) explores the psychodynamic processes of the interview situation between a white researcher and black respondents, Shah (2004, pp. 553-565) examines “the insider/outsider debate” and “locates the researcher/interviewer as a ‘cultural intruder’ in a cross-cultural context”, which is the case in the current research.

The framework of this study is both highly complex and context specific; hence the use of adaptive theory which acknowledges and should help the researcher interpret participants’ normative

assumptions. Adaptive theory allows one to move from quantitative approaches that rely on scientific positivism to phenomenological enquiry that provides for greater understanding of higher level complexities. The implied cultural significance is “that even complex models which derive from a Western origin can only be a foundation for developing indigenous theory and not a substitution for it” (Lowe 1998, p. 15). In other words, situations with which the researcher is naturally familiar should only provide a starting point and the research design needs to foster new connections and insights.

As a way of reviewing curriculum outcomes, Liu (1998, p. 121) contextualised the Chinese characteristic of utilitarianism from two social needs. Traditionally study was geared for practical use and “not to create thinkers and theorists of the exploring kind”. Thus the usefulness of the course was that it allowed you to get a job after qualifying, not that generic skills were built into the curriculum. The new approach adopted by Shenzhen University was a first. Few universities in China have paid as much attention to “the practicality, suitability and applicability of its curriculum” (Liu 1998, p. 123) to the local economy and context as Shenzhen University. As well as changing curricula, the department and course names have been changed or had the term “Applied” added to stress a less theoretical focus. The result has been increased enrolments by high scoring students in the College Entrance Exams, mostly into its highly regarded International Finance and Trade courses. “Because such fast food-type, applied courses take less time and energy and can be put to immediate use after graduation, a large number of students are head over heels in love with them” (Liu 1998, p. 132). The value of contextualising or localising has become apparent to the students, lecturers and employers; in other words, generic skills have a role if they assist in the application of theory.

## 5.10 Summary

This chapter has presented a number of ways of viewing, structuring and understanding the research and highlights the important and complex influences that need to be considered. Hence this chapter reviews social phenomena research issues, socially constructed meaning, Adaptive Theory and the more extant theories of power, education and culture before examining, in the next chapter, previous methods used to explore graduate attributes.

Given the need to understand the effect of curriculum, politics and strong social mores on the various actors, the current study requires a comprehensive, integrated approach. The internationalised graduate attributes conceptual model allows for macro phenomena such as business ownership, educational structures and objectives, and institutional knowledge to be derived from documentary and empirical data. Additionally, there is an historical dimension in order to show how “power and domination have been incorporated into the structural features of settings and context, as a consequence of various forms of social development” (Layder 1993, p. 118). However, it is the

personal phenomena of the stakeholders' perceptions about graduate attributes and employability skills which are the subject of the research for this thesis; collected and interpreted from various viewpoints they should be used to guide educational practices to determine the most appropriate option for future curriculum development.

Chapter Six describes the Research Method adopted by this study that allows for reciprocal values, iterative development of knowledge, and research informing theory formation.

## Chapter Six Research method

### 6.0 Introduction

This chapter takes the methodologies outlined in Chapter Five and relates them to the research questions which are then operationalised by introducing and explaining the research methods chosen for the thesis. The focus is on the lived experience of the participants, the factors that have influenced this experience and their personal interpretations of the experience. The focus is also on the novelty and dilemmas of different systems and ways of thinking coming together, or at least impacting each other. While this sits precariously in a country which has had a turbulent history and ongoing sensitivities, the approach might reveal a new understanding of graduate attributes in China and promote internationalisation.

The complexities of overlaying an educational framework that seems to have merit in one culture onto another quite different culture and educational context should not be understated. The attempt occurs sometimes as it is difficult to move from what is familiar, which Furnham (2005) argues is the commonsense approach. It could be argued that assuming what is possible in one location might be possible in another should be questioned from a cultural-linguistic as well as a scientific perspective (Kwong et al 2010). This research questions the cultural-linguistic and the methodology (see Chapter Five) allows for flexibility and adaptation of ideas and theories to allow the realities of the new context to direct the form of any emerging hypotheses. Chapter Five presented not just the philosophical approach of this thesis but a heuristic for a complex transnational education situation. While the heuristic itself is not the subject of the research questions, in the final analysis there is an evaluation of its usefulness to the research.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the method used to assess and examine graduating student, lecturer and employer perceptions about specific characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills of new graduates in China in order to answer two questions:

1. What characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills being developed in the B Bus curriculum are particularly valued by Chinese employers?
2. What characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills are valued by Chinese employers but not developed or included in the B Bus curriculum?

The chapter examines previous methods used in graduate attribute research particularly from the need for a contextualised framework, reviews the current research hypotheses then presents an overview of all aspects of the research design and implementation. It extensively analyses how effective survey data can be developed.

## 6.1 Methods used in graduate attribute research and their implications

This section will limit itself to reviewing the methods used by some of the studies discussed in Chapter Two. The purpose is to identify methods and their associated strengths and weaknesses with a view to establishing which methods are most contextually appropriate for the research questions. Generally, while much qualitative and quantitative data has been gathered, often it has been presented as a government report, with little exposition of alternative methods or extensive literature review. Having said this, there are many well informed research papers that should be considered.

### 6.1.1 United Kingdom

Dearing (1997) surveyed senior employers of large publicly listed companies, a selection of other large companies, and small to medium sized enterprises. The sample was not randomly selected and was not statistically representative of the population of employers. Results from that research are presented in Appendix B, but Question nine (Table 25) from his survey is directly relevant to the current research:

Table 18 Question 9

Are there significant differences in the particular attributes of your current employees with higher education qualifications compared with your employees with no such qualifications?

Attributes	Please tick those that apply
Personal qualities (drive, motivation, leadership etc.)	
Applied skills (eg. working in a team; problem solving)	
Technical skills (eg. IT, foreign language)	
Communication skills (eg. oral and written)	
Ability to reflect and to continue to learn	
Mental and conceptual skills (eg. numeracy, analysis, assimilation of information)	
Preparation for work (eg. Understanding employers' constraints)	
Understanding change	

Source: Dearing 1997, Appendix 4, Annex A Employer questionnaire, Question 9

The responses to this question were analysed with reference to other answers. When cross referenced with what employers believed they would need in the future and with current deficiencies identified, communication skills, people skills and business skills were found to be critical.

Harvey, Moon and Geall (1997, p. 1) conducted a predominantly qualitative study in order to “get behind the meaning of the skills, competencies and abilities - rather than generate yet more lists - to explore what they involve, in practice, in the work setting”. They carried out semi-structured, comprehensive interviews with 84 strategic managers, 55 line managers, 84 graduates and 35 non-graduate employees in 91 organisations. Each interview was recorded and lasted between 30 and 85

minutes. The transcribed interviews were entered into a qualitative database and analysed “to explore nuances of meaning and context and reported using indicative quotes to allow the respondents to speak for themselves” (Birmingham City University n.d., p. 1). As noted in Appendix B, the team concluded that employers wanted knowledgeable, intelligent, adaptable graduates with a willingness to develop self-management skills, communication skills, team-working and interpersonal skills.

Research such as *Work Skills in Britain 1986 – 2001* (Felstead et al. 2002) used surveys and questionnaires to gather longitudinal data to improve and update knowledge of the skills used in Britain’s changing workplaces. It surveyed a range of employers, not just employers of graduates, and investigated the degree to which generic skills were used in particular jobs. Of relevance to the methodology in this thesis, *Work Skills in Britain* focused on qualification levels, training and learning times, generic skills used across all occupations, and the labour market value of these skills. It did not explore personal behavioural attributes even though the report notes that the DfEE (2000) and Campbell, Baldwin, Johnson, Chapman, Upton and Walton (2001) state that employers may factor in such attributes when recruiting (Felstead et al. 2002, p. 20). The surveys built on previously successfully tested instruments from sociology, psychology and economics, and combined quantitative and more technical skills with the new skills demanded by globalisation by systematically ascertaining the tasks people do in their work. In other words, they focused on the job more so than the person doing the job.

The 2001 Skills Survey differed from other ongoing surveys related to skills. Firstly, aspects of training and learning were collected regularly through the Quarterly Labour Force Survey, through the National Adult Learning Survey, and at the employer level through the Learning and Training at Work surveys (Felstead et al. 2002, p. 18). From the training and learning data, suggestions were made about new skills moving into the labour market, whereas the 2001 Skills Survey focused on the skills used in workplaces, and collected no information about current training activity. The 2001 Skills Survey also differed from the Employers Skills Survey series, which began in 1999 to support the National Skills Task Force, with an emphasis on skill shortages, skill gaps and skill deficiencies faced by employers (Felstead et al. 2002, p. 18). After piloting a sub section of the survey to confirm that new questions conveyed the intended meaning and as a result modifying some of the questions, a method of data collection called computer aided personal interview was used to administer the full survey. Eventually, 4470 useable interviews were conducted on people in the workforce aged between 20 and 60 years. Felstead et al. (2002, p. 54) concluded that between 1997 and 2001:

several measures show rising generic skill requirements of jobs ... The importance of computer skills rose more rapidly in the last four years than any other job skill... The last four



years has also seen a substantial rise in the average qualification level required for jobs. However, the required training time has decreased over this period

Brennan et al. (2001) reported on the first comprehensive study comparing UK with European and Japanese graduates. Graduates were mailed a written questionnaire. Questions were grouped into ten sections focusing on education before entry into higher education, the higher education experience, job search and employment history, attitudes, values and competencies in relation to employment and career. Data was weighted to correct for any biases resulting from sample characteristics, differential response rates between fields of study and types of institution.

Reflecting the variety and quantity of research which has taken place in this field, the Skills Plus project worked with several discipline areas in four universities to enhance lecturer's contributions to undergraduate skills development. Simultaneously there were interviews with 97 new graduate hires and 117 of their co-workers or immediate supervisors to see what employability meant in practice, a pilot study with ten unemployed recent graduates, and an investigation of the efficacy beliefs of over 200 first and final year undergraduates (Lees 2002). The employer interviewees chosen were in close contact with the new recruits, rather than having high-level managerial responsibilities, on the basis that the project was interested in employability as understood by recent recruits and those with relatively close contact with them (Knight & Yorke 2004). This provided a day-to-day perspective of employability rather than the more overview perspective of the human resource manager. The recently recruited graduates were asked about the factors that had influenced their gaining employment; whereas the recruiters were asked what they thought was important in new recruits.

From interviews which were confirmed by questionnaires, Stapleford and Leggott (2008) concluded that the students had a low awareness of their own skills development, a poor understanding of the transferability of skills and that many were unaware of employers' skills requirements. This is also the premise of the current research, but the problem is compounded in China due to little empirical research on determining the skill requirements of Chinese employers, and the fact that the Bachelor of Business curriculum was not originally designed for Chinese students studying only in China or for Chinese students who would be returning to China for employment.

### 6.1.2 European

Allen, Ramaekers and van der Velden (2003) in the Netherlands developed the survey tool in Table 26 to determine if new Bachelor and Masters curricula with workplace interventions better prepared new graduates for work, compared to peers who had completed traditional programs. The authors identified a number of measurement errors associated with quantitative instruments and discussed how these were minimised. The implications of their research method for the current study have been

to minimise errors relating to vague questions by avoiding composite questions, errors of subjective judgment by ensuring homogeneity of the respondent group, and errors of comparability by asking the same questions of different groups. The authors also decided that active wording such as “ability to make one’s meaning clear to others” was less ambiguous than “communicative skills”; hence provide more reliable and valid data. After rejecting the idea of using professional interviewers due to issues of validity, efficiency and cost, or supervisors due to response rate and sample design issues, graduates were asked to ‘self report’ on their current ability level of certain competencies, the level of ability for each competency that the job required, and whether it was learned inside or outside their course of study.

**Table 19 Survey tool to determine value of new Bachelor and Masters curricula with workplace interventions**

Below is a list of aspects that may be important for work. Give for each aspect an estimate of: - your own level of ability (a ‘grade’ ranging from 1 to 10); - (if applicable) the level of ability required in your current job (a ‘grade’ ranging from 1 to 10); - where you mainly learned the aspect (a ‘grade’ ranging from 1 ‘outside course’ to 5 ‘in course’)			
		Grade between 1 and 10 for:	
		your level of ability	the level required in current job
		Aspect mainly learned outside your course ◁in your course: 1...5	
<i>Knowledge of:</i>			
A	your own field or discipline		
B	other fields or disciplines		
<i>Ability to:</i>			
C	apply your field-specific knowledge at work		
D	use information & communication technology		
E	communicate in foreign languages		
F	gather information		
G	notice problems and possibilities as they arise		
H	draw connections between different subjects		
I	distinguish major priorities from secondary matters		
J	construct or analyse logical arguments		
K	work within a budget, plan or guideline		
L	perform well under pressure		
M	take decisive action		
N	come up with new ideas and solutions		
O	learn new things		
P	make your meaning clear to others		
Q	work productively with others		
R	mobilize the capacities of		

	others			
S	perform your tasks without supervision			
<i>Willingness to:</i>				
T	stick your neck out			
U	question your own and others' ideas			
V	stand up for your own point of view			
W	take the point of view of others into account			
Name a maximum of 3 aspects from above list for which you felt that your university course paid:				
a. too little attention				
b. too much attention				

Source: Initial 2002 survey tool (from Allen et al 2003, p. 19)

Based on their analysis of the pilot test results which found a low variance between and within fields of study and occupations and below six on the ten point scale seldom used, Allen et al. (2003, p.20) reduced the ten points to a five point scale and asked about current job level before the personal level.

Allen et al. also make the argument for identifying “context neutral action competencies” which should be equivalent across contexts and cohorts regardless of education and the labour market (Allen et al. 2003, p. 17). Their matrix neatly summarises within what context some competencies are acquired and what forces impact the competencies required. It should be stressed that each work situation would have its own unique matrix. A simplified and incomplete example of action competencies applied to competence dimensions is shown in Table 27.

**Table 20 Competency acquisition matrix**

<b>Context-neutral action competencies:</b>	<b>Competence dimensions / action categories:</b>					
	Solving problems	Decision making	Communication	Leadership	Dealing with clients	Learning
Knowledge of own field or discipline						
Ability to apply field-specific knowledge						
Ability to use information technology						
Ability to communicate in foreign languages						
Ability to notice problems and opportunities						
Ability to draw connections						

Ability to distinguish major priorities						
Ability to take decisive action						
Ability to make one's meaning clear to others						
Ability to mobilize the capacity of others						
Willingness to stick one's neck out						
Willingness to question one's own and others' ideas						

Source: Allen et al. 2003, p.12

In a later conceptual paper Allen and van der Velden (2005a) analysed the impact of the current knowledge society and organisational practices on higher education graduates and developed a framework to determine the competencies of a graduate employee. They asked graduates from a range of European countries who had graduated five years earlier about educational experiences and characteristics of their experience of the workplace. The research used a multidisciplinary approach including “theories and insights from sociology, economics, psychology and educational science to develop an overarching framework” (Allen & van der Velden 2005a, p. 2). Other data was collected from each country “to identify the main structural and institutional factors framing the transition from higher education to work”, and a qualitative study was conducted to explore “the main developments in higher education and in the economy that affect the acquired and required competences”. Finally, and of particular significance to this thesis, is the underlying philosophy of ongoing learning and change, that their current conceptual framework is “work in progress” (Allen & van der Velden 2005a, p. 11); it can be altered subject to further findings. The authors outline the influences on higher education which impact on acquired competencies and required competencies of graduates in the workplace. They include further education as well as work-based competencies, HE competencies, and initial student competencies that through the process of selection and recruitment interact with the job and organisational characteristics (required competencies) to produce an outcome; an employed graduate.

### 6.1.3 United States of America

In the United States Hafer and Hoth (1981) and Holland and Herron (1982) examined selection criteria. Both studies required managers and students to rank 26 job selection attributes and found differences between employer and student responses. Neither study had a cultural investigative component. Peppas, Peppas and Jin (1999) furthered the research by comparing the importance of

different job selection criteria to individuals from different cultures. To determine the existence of any cultural difference, Chinese and Anglo-Americans from public and private sectors in the US were surveyed about the importance of 26 job selection attributes. Later, Peppas and Yu (2005) sampled Chinese university students in the US on the importance of certain job candidate attributes. The measurement instrument included a modified list of Hafer and Hoth's (1981) 26 attributes and respondents indicated on a Likert scale their perceived importance of each attribute for the hiring process. The student and employer data sets were compared statistically. Parametric and non-parametric tests were conducted to confirm the results. The rankings are given in Chapter Two; there are more differences than similarities between the rankings of the criteria by the three respondent groups.

#### 6.1.4 Australia

Research in Australia used similar methods to those presented above. Some studies, such as Candy and Crebert (1991) endeavoured to document the differences between higher education and workplace requirements (See Chapter Two for their summary table). Building on Szanton's ten cultural differences between academic, public and private institutions, and based on other literature, they developed a set of extreme statements about the way people learn and behave in academia and the workplace. They represented the differences as factual statements rather than as dimensions on a continuum (Candy & Crebert 1991, pp. 577-578).

In another study the Australian Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs (AC Nielson 2000) examined employer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the skills of new graduates entering the labour market. It included quantitative data collection (mail survey, telephone recruitment screening followed by a self-completion mail-return questionnaire) and qualitative research (focus groups and in-depth interviews) mostly with Human Resource managers, screened to ensure they had recruited within the past two years, but also with some graduates. Over 1000 completed surveys were coded and weighted in terms of size and industry. The research tools and methods enabled skills important to employers to be identified, compared to skills possessed by the new graduates. The findings relating to skill deficiencies are discussed in Chapter Two, but the research also found that university graduates performed better than TAFE graduates and larger businesses rated their new graduates more highly than smaller businesses.

Whitefield's (2003) research on skills of accounting students used content analysis and then Likert scales to determine the degree to which the curriculum developed personal and interpersonal skills. Her approach examined the themes of subject-level documents to determine whether the skills were being developed implicitly or explicitly. Her definition of 'explicit content' referred to actual words and terms used in the documents and 'implicit content' for inferences drawn from the context, which

required a value judgement (See Chapter Two which discusses Whitefield's explicit content overlaid with skills). These findings were cross referenced with employer perceptions of how the same skills were displayed by graduates in the workplace. Finally employers were interviewed and asked to rank the skills. Chang and Tharenou (2004) effectively used content analysis to identify five competencies needed to manage a multicultural workforce and 27 sub-themes. They believed that their data pool of 20 managers which is not dissimilar to that of this research limited the validity and generalisability.

Bath, Smith, Stein and Swann (2004, p. 314) conducted a case study of student and lecturer perceptions of graduate attribute development in three particular subjects of a course. They first reviewed a mapping process which, while making explicit "to students, teachers, management and other stakeholders the existing support and opportunities for the development of the institution's espoused graduate attributes", did not ensure an alignment between what is taught, experienced and learnt. They argue that the action research cycle adopted by one school within the University of Queensland "is a validation process that preserves the integrity of curriculum design for discipline-nuanced generic skill development, but which goes beyond the mapping of espoused and enacted development opportunities across the curriculum" (Bath et al 2004, p. 315). The survey tool, administered at the end of semester focused on the university's graduate attributes; it used a Likert scale and open-ended questions to "review the curriculum in order to ascertain whether the perceptions of students in terms of development of graduate attributes was similar to that of the course coordinator for individual courses" (Bath et al. 2004, p. 320). Both the student and teacher versions of the survey were identical, with the leading questions rephrased to suit the participants' frame of reference. The mean student and teacher rating for each item were then compared. While this study did not investigate any formal subject based assessment of graduate attributes,

The strength of using student perceptions is that it captures developments that were not intended by the curriculum, and expected or espoused by the teachers. Further, one would have either to accept perceptual measures for teachers' expectations of curriculum outcomes, or develop objective measures for these as well, and it is hard to see how this could be done in a manner more efficient and effective than simply surveying individual teachers for their perceptions (Bath et al. 2004, pp. 325-326).

The concept of an action research cycle for continuous improvement fits with adaptive theory which asserts that theory and research should be interdependent. Furthermore, theory construction should be "evolving and generative" (Bessant & Francis 2005, p. 93) which aligns with the systematic review and reflection stage of action research, coming after the 'doing' and before the 'improving'. At some point after a complete cycle, it can be determined whether extant theories are being adapted or extended, or new theories are emerging. Bessant and Francis (2005, p. 93) concluded that "standalone

theories were not challenged in a fundamental way but gaps were found and the ways in which theories were configured for use changed markedly”. They were able to reach this conclusion having explicitly mapped the orientating theories before intervention.

McKeown (2006, p. 5) examined both employment expectations and the process of finding employment. The study draws on data from two sets of interviews: the first with forty five graduate students and the second with five university career centres (UCCs) based in Melbourne, Australia, that gathered information around three research questions:

1. *University graduates* – what are their expectations of employment after graduation and how do they pursue this employment?
2. *Employers* – what are their expectations of graduates?
3. *University career centres (UCCs)* – what job search assistance do they offer graduates and which are the most helpful to graduates in the job seeking process.

To investigate the first two questions most survey items came from the widely used and validated Australian Graduate Destination Survey 2002 and 2003 but were supplemented by questions from other surveys. Data from the interviews was organised and analysed thematically. Barrie (2006) however argues that interview data can be very diverse and may be better understood if viewed phenomenologically. The 15 academics he interviewed from different disciplines about their conceptions of the generic graduate attributes presented quite different views of graduate attributes. He suggests “From the phenomenographic perspective individuals come to experience the world in these qualitatively different ways, in part as a result of the previous experiences they bring to any situation” (Barrie 2006, p. 234). The disciplinary background of academics could account for the range of understandings of the phenomenon of graduate attributes. The model that emerged from a phenomenological analysis which allowed for pooling the data, then identifying statements relevant to the phenomenon, followed by grouping and categorising the experiences contained “Four increasingly complex, qualitatively distinct understandings or categories of description” (Barrie 2006, pp. 223-4).

A second level of analysis looked at the variation between respondent’s personal conceptualisations of graduate attributes. The impact of diverse perspectives at an institutional level is that “uptake and implementation of graduate attributes curriculum initiatives has been variable” (Barrie 2006, p. 235) but “this inconsistency is understandable, particularly given the influence of individual teachers’ understandings of the intended course and degree outcomes on what is actually taught and assessed in university courses” (Barrie 2006, p. 234).

Graduate Careers Australia collects data annually via the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) and Graduate Destination Survey (GDS). These two tools have been refined to ensure that the

resulting data is more meaningful and accurate, and the methods standardised and scripted so that they can be administered systematically by phone, email or hardcopy. Hence the data collected is now regarded as reliable and valid and can be analysed by year as well as over a period of years. The CEQ asks graduates to respond to six statements:

- The course helped me develop my ability to work as a team member
- The course sharpened my analytic skills
- The course developed my problem-solving skills
- The course improved my skills in written communication
- As a result of my course, I feel confident about tackling unfamiliar problems
- My course helped me to develop the ability to plan my own work (Graduate Careers Australia 2006, p. 240).

To inform the goals of the courses, employers of graduates are asked to prioritise their selection criteria for employing new graduates.

#### **6.1.5 Studies involving Chinese international students and Chinese students in China**

The Australian Government 2006 report *The International Education Market in China* is relevant as much for its methodology as for its purpose and findings. This comprehensive study involved “desk research, surveys, focus groups and interviews with policy makers, embassy officials, employers, education analysts and industry stakeholders” (AEI 2006, p. 22). A local business carried out phone and paper based surveys in China and targeted parents of students who had the financial means and who had already expressed interest in overseas education for their children. They also contacted employers in China to identify recruitment methods and to determine their “perceptions of Chinese graduates of foreign and domestic education institutions across all sectors of education, as well as of foreign education delivered in China vis-à-vis that delivered offshore” (AEI 2006, p. 22).

Multinational employers were approached via an online survey tool and email campaign in English and local companies through a combination of online surveying in English and telephone and face to face surveying in Chinese (AEI 2006, p. 22). Employers complained of a lack of basic competencies such as “effective communication, interpersonal skills, functional skills, independent research capabilities and creativity” (AEI 2006, p. 14), while the Chinese government and employers both expressed concern about the graduates’ lack of marketplace experience and practical skills.

The 40 item questionnaire of universal and Confucian values, known as the Chinese Value Survey, identified four dimensions of Chinese cultural values namely: integration, human goodness, moral discipline and Confucian work dynamism (Bond 1988, 1991; Bond & Hwang 1986). Building on this research Matthews (2000) analysed responses from international Chinese students at three Australian



universities, using principal components analysis rotated to an orthogonal structure, and as a result realigned the value statements and hence renamed the scales: Integrity and Tolerance, Confucian Ethos, Loyalty to Ideals and Humanity, and Moderation and Moral Discipline. The note of caution is that while Confucianism may be a significant dimension in East Asian cultures there are regional differences due to local cultural configurations and situational contexts (Chen 1995; Huo & Randall 1991; Lowe 1998).

The above study did not explicitly link the workplace and university. Pearson and Entekin (2001) however, examined the Chinese Value Survey<sup>27</sup>, reducing it to the top 17 items as identified through factor analysis, then asked managers in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore to indicate on a Likert scale the importance of each item to managerial work.

To explore negotiation practices Liu, Friedman and Chi (2005, p. 232) employed Goldberg's (1992) unipolar Five-factor model of personality which had been used with American MBA students to assess extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience, with Taiwanese MBA participants using a Chinese tool from Psychological Assessment Resources. Although both tools were different versions of the five-factor model, they gave conceptually equivalent measures of personality (correlations averaging 0.94 corrected for attenuation).

To measure harmony, face, and *Ren Qing*, the three individualized Chinese cultural norms, Liu, Friedman and Chi (2005, p. 233) used scales from the Chinese Personality Assessment Inventory (CPAI) developed by Cheung and colleagues (Cheung et al. 1996; Cheung et al. 2001). To de-emphasise *guanxi*, the CPAI measures *guanxi* as a sixth personality factor called "*Harmony in interpersonal relationship*." Participants completed these measures in their native language after versions had been translated, back-translated, tested, and retested, and the validity and reliability had been established by the developers of the CPAI (Cheung et al. 1996; 2001). It was found that agreeableness and extraversion (from the "Big Five"<sup>TM</sup>) affected negotiations for Americans, but not for Chinese, and harmony, face and *Ren Qing* (from the Chinese-based scales) affected negotiations for Chinese, but not for Americans.

Personality testing is an approach used in the employment selection process, but in China it raises several conundrums. An organisation, if viewed as an holistic entity that values collectivist thinking and concern for "face", most likely places less importance on the individual agency and hence on an individual's personality (Gao, Arnulf & Kristoffersen 2008). However the use of personality tests is spreading in China, with reported positive consequences in education, selection and self-awareness

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<sup>27</sup> Collectively known as the Chinese Cultural Connection (1987)

development. These turn the hiring process from being relationship-based to rule-based (Gao, Arnulf & Kristoffersen 2008); the tests produce results that deem applicants as “good” or “bad” for the organisation.

Finally, creativity and innovation are skills mentioned frequently in Chinese government documents as desirable employability skills. A market driven economy needs such skills to stimulate economic growth. Li and Pak (2008) note the absence of these skills in Chinese businesses and suggest that some business sectors have more opportunity to instil this way of thinking than the education sector. They propose a Systems Thinking Model in Strategy Management Innovation for Chinese companies. Within Higher Education, creativity is a skill encompassed by the term Academic Literacy (Whitelaw & Henderson forthcoming). In the current research the term creativity is not used but the idea is incorporated and contextualised in a number of ways: *open minded* and *risk taker* are in the list of personal characteristics, “*show a willingness to try new ideas /tasks*” is one of the general attributes and “*apply knowledge*” and “*come up with new ideas*” are workplace skills that respondents have to rate with an importance statement.

## 6.2 Contextualised framework

Contextualising the research tools and the resulting data is critical to emphasise the uniqueness of the research and the significance of the structure / agency roles. The hypotheses presented on pages 12-13 encourage this as do the approaches presented in Chapter Five. The qualitative data from interviews, the quantitative data from surveys, the iterative process of reviewing the data against the literature, assessing and re-assessing the data and presentation of a context specific case should contribute to the triangulation of the current research and to viewing culture, in the same contextualised and dynamic manner as Clifford Geertz:

as a system of construable signs or symbols, interwoven with the world of action, not directly 'causing' the formation of institutions, behaviours, or processes, but acting as a context .... within which such institutions can be intelligibly - in other words thickly - described. This is similar to the position of Giddens (1984) that culture is shaping action at the same time as action is shaping culture, with the two co-evolving. So there has to be enough context included to cover the main determinants of people's viewpoints. Selecting just the supposedly dominant influences is an error. Life is not that simple (cited in Redding 2005, p. 129).

## 6.3 Research design

As the main purpose of the research design is to present the most valid, accurate answer to the research problem, it is therefore a plan that should include when, where, from whom and how data are

obtained. Methods are commonly labelled qualitative, quantitative or a mix of both. Neuman (2006) argued that qualitative research often depends on interpretive or critical social science, while quantitative research depends on a positivist approach. According to Creswell (1998, p. 15) qualitative research is “an inquiry process of understanding ... The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting”. In contrast, quantitative research designs restrict the human element by using more “mechanical” techniques. The design should be replicable, following standardised methodological procedures, numerically measured and statistically analysed (Neuman 2006).

### 6.3.1 Quantitative or qualitative?

Each approach has its advantages and disadvantages. For instance, a quantitative research method can measure the reactions of many people to a series of questions, enabling aggregation and statistical comparison of data. This presents concise, possibly generalisable findings (Patton 1990) and importantly achieves reliable data due to the controlled procedures (Graziano & Raulin 1989). However some advantages are also limitations, such as restricting subjective judgement either by the subject or the researcher, strict identification of independent and dependent variables, and no ongoing, developing investigation of a research phenomenon. In particular, quantitative approaches do not give the researcher contextual information about where the studied phenomenon happens and, with a self-paced survey, while the survey presentation can be controlled, the environment of the participants responding cannot be controlled (Babbie 2004; Patton 1990).

In contrast, the qualitative method has several advantages. Firstly, more flexibility for data collection, analysis, and interpretation; secondly, the ability to cooperate more with the researcher’s participants in their own language and on their own terms (Creswell 2002); thirdly, obtaining an understanding of the world of the participant and area being investigated that is not achievable through the numerical data of quantitative research (Babbie 2004); fourthly, the less formal relationship between the researcher and the participant; and finally, participants may respond using their own words, rather than selecting from fixed responses (Babbie 2004).

The negative aspects of qualitative research focus on standards of validity and reliability which, due to the personal and contextual nature of qualitative research, can be harder to apply systematically. Also data collection, analysis and interpretation can take longer and gender and ethnicity of researchers can impact on answers provided by the subjects (Clarke 2000). Johnston (2003, p. 422) argues that interviews offer legitimate information about perceptions, but not always about actions and actual trends.

It is always useful to know what people think is important and how they conceptualise their world and legitimate their behaviour to themselves and others... Employers *say* they want graduates with various skills (team-workers, good communicators, flexible graduates, good interpersonal skills, adaptive, adaptable, transformative employees) (Harvey *et al.*, 1997). However, this agenda is not the innocent selection process it seems, given the unequal possession among different sectors of the graduate population of social and interpersonal skills acceptable to employers...

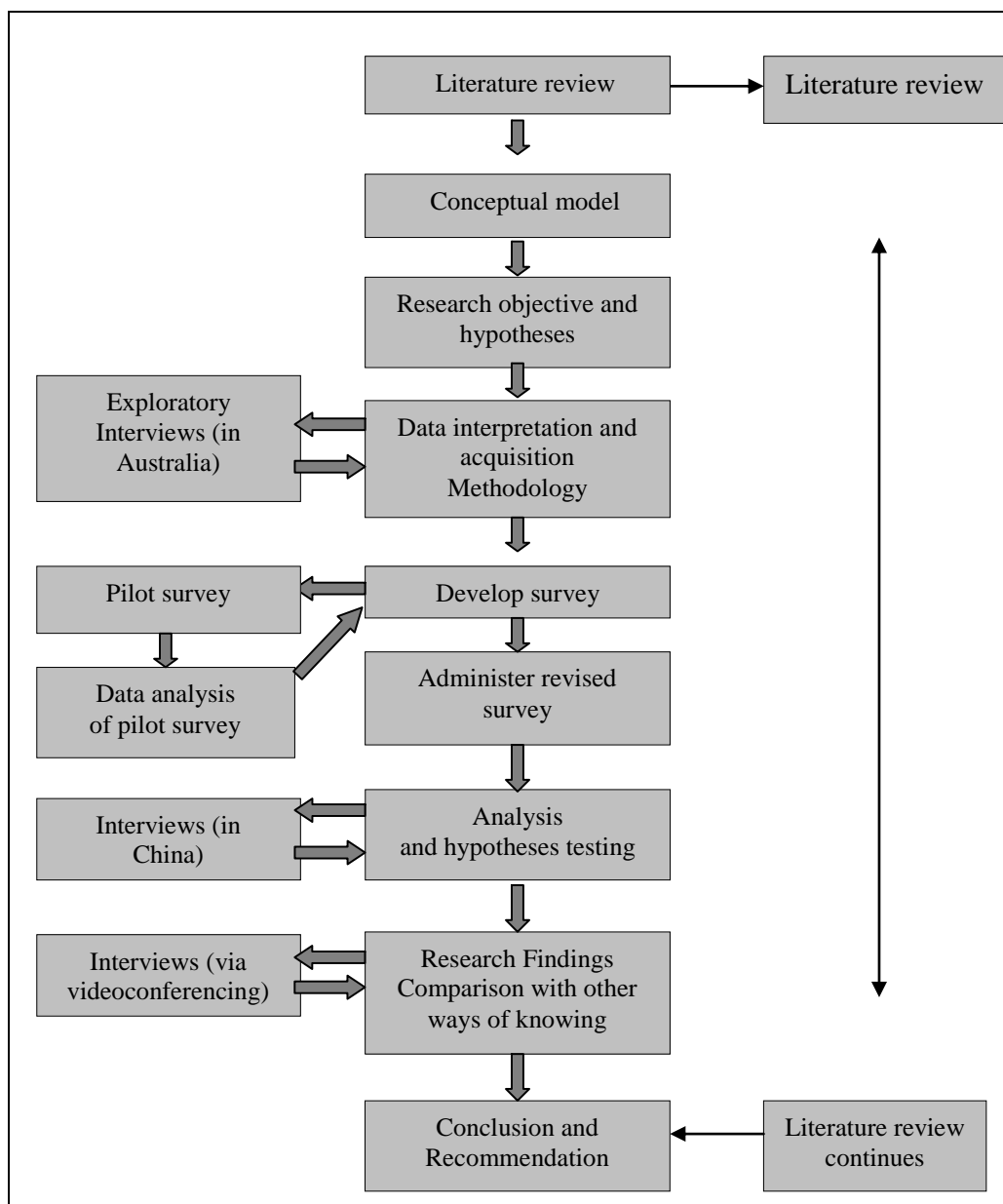
The literature review in Chapters Two, Three and Four indicated that there are many perceptual and other factors influencing graduate skill development and employment outcomes, including personal characteristics, workplace skills, workplace culture, workplace practices, parental expectations, teachers and traditional ways of thinking. Given that perceptions can be transient, this research has employed a mixed method design for the following reasons: the nature of some research questions investigating personal characteristics and skill development could be systematically collected from a reasonably large student cohort which led to the use of a quantitative methodology; the same questions could be asked of their teachers and potential employers and a quantitative methodology would allow a statistical comparison of results; and in order to extract maximum information, a smaller teacher and employer dataset was required to examine issues interpretatively, which meant a qualitative methodology was also required. The mixed method approach hence provides a comprehensive exploration of the employability skills and graduate attributes being developed by Chinese students to determine whether these match those required by Chinese employers.

The mixed method investigation can be built from or constructed as a case study which, according to Veal (2005, p. 170) “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and rely on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion”. Yin (1994) asserts that case studies are especially suitable for research questions like “How” and “Why”, which may be answered very differently by particular groups of respondents. The case study allows for analysis of different perspectives and for further areas of inquiry for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Yin (1994) and more recently Zikmund (2003) see advantages in the attention to detail required but Leedy and Ormrod (2001) and Babbie (2004) argue that the mixed method is too limiting and the findings are not universally representative. As argued in 6.2, the context is critical to understanding the various educational and business environments in China; hence the case study approach has been utilised to further contextualise the research and the findings.

## 6.4 Overview of the process followed in this research

The critical steps in this study are: literature review, conceptual model, research objectives and hypotheses, data acquisition methodology, exploratory interviews, survey development, pilot survey, data analysis and findings of pilot survey, design main survey, quantitative analysis and testing hypotheses, further interviews and finally recommendations and conclusion. These steps are illustrated in Figure 5 and are described in detail in Appendix E.

Figure 5 The research process



#### 6.4.1 Ethics approval

The ethics application addressed issues of freewill, privacy, confidentiality and other potential risks. Respondents were informed about the secure storage of data, that they could withdraw at any time without penalty, and that the research tools requested no identifying information which Babbie (2007) argues can help to increase the likelihood and accuracy of responses. The researcher had to demonstrate awareness of issues that may be sensitive, document how any discomfort by a participant would be managed, and demonstrate free choice of participation; hence the notion of “Informed Consent”. This approach addresses Neuman’s (2006, p. 135) fundamental ethical principle of social research: “never coerce anyone into participating; participation must be voluntary”.

An equivalent approval process did not exist in China. Nevertheless the data collection fulfilled all the above conditions and completed surveys and interview notes are securely stored in Melbourne.

#### 6.4.2 Participants

All employers were line managers or human resource managers who had recruited new graduates in the last two years. The researcher targeted two groups of lecturers: Chinese teachers teaching the VU Bachelor of Business to Chinese students in China and Chinese teachers teaching a Chinese Bachelor of Business to Chinese students in China. Two groups of students targeted were: Chinese students in their last semester or who had graduated in the last 6 months (alumni) with a VU Bachelor of Business in Melbourne, and Chinese students in their last semester of a VU Bachelor of Business or who had graduated in the last 6 months (alumni) with a VU Bachelor of Business in China. Both academic staff and new graduates were invited to participate and participation was voluntary.

#### 6.4.3 Sampling

Babbie (2007, p. 183) defined two types of sampling methods; probability as “the general term for samples selected in accord with probability theory, typically involving some random-selection mechanism” and non-probability sampling, as “any technique in which samples are selected in some way not suggested by probability theory”. While non-probability sampling has limitations in relation to representation of a population, it was selected for the purpose of this study as the only feasible option given the relatively small population of students and lecturers and limited access to employers.

Babbie (2007) and Neuman (2006) identify four types of non-probability sampling: 1) convenience samples, 2) snowball sampling, 3) quota sampling, and 4) purposive or judgmental sampling. The rationale for the purposive sampling procedure used in this study was that, although the targeted university lecturers, students and employers may not be representative of all within the category, they were representative of the vanguard of change and therefore in a position to provide information

relevant to my topic (Babbie 2007). The researcher used her knowledge of the joint TNE program to select sample members who conformed to the criterion, namely Chinese graduating students who planned to work in China, lecturers who teach the Australian or Chinese version of the Bachelor of Business, and employers who have recently hired graduates with this qualification. Nevertheless, there were numerous obstacles to obtaining completed surveys and formal “on the record” interviews with employers, as detailed later in this chapter and in the Discussion chapter.

## **6.5 Research instrument (1) – questionnaire**

Baumgartner and Strong (1998) assert that a questionnaire is a communication tool for data collection which consists of written questions for the participants to answer. However, as Leedy and Ormrod (2001) and Cavana, Delahaye and Sekaran (2001) argue that questionnaire design affects the response rate, reliability and validity of the data collected, attention must be paid to:

1. Wording of each question;
2. Design and general appearance of the questionnaire;
3. Instructions and explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire;
4. Predetermining the variables’ scales, categorising and coding the responses; and
5. Pretesting.

These five points guided the researcher’s efforts to minimise bias and to obtain maximum reliability and validity.

### **6.5.1 Question formation**

In terms of the questions, Cavana et al. (2001) emphasised five principles: the appropriateness of the content, language and wording, type and form of questions, sequencing and demographic information. Hence the researcher avoided jargon or abbreviations, re-phrased questions to contextualise them for each respondent group, avoided unnecessary or ambiguous questions, logically grouped questions to move from easier, general questions to more specific ones, avoided any highly sensitive questions, used response categories instead of specific figures, and presented all instructions and questions bilingually.

According to Cavana et al. (2001), the type of question refers to whether it is open-ended or closed. The question ‘form’ refers to positively and negatively worded questions. As summarised in the data analysis section, both types of questions were asked to give the respondent an opportunity to add personal knowledge. Furthermore, the researcher included some negatively worded questions which, according to Cavana et al. (2001), assist the researcher to detect any bias. For instance: employers

were asked to respond to “concentrate well on given tasks” and “are easily distracted from set tasks” in the last section.

Response choice was examined to ensure equal comparisons, balance and mutual exclusivity. The use of mostly closed questions with the complete range of possible answers helped respondents answer quickly and were easier for the researcher to code for subsequent analysis (Cavana 2001; Neuman 2006).

### **6.5.2 Translation**

To minimise cross cultural differences in understanding and to encourage a response (Cavusgil & Das 1997) the questionnaire should be in the local language. Translation can also assist with conceptual, instrument and measurement equivalence (Cavusgil & Das 1997). So to ensure maximum precision Chinese characters rather than pinyin have been used. The questionnaire in the current research study was developed in English by the researcher, translated into Chinese characters by one bilingual translator and back-translated into English by a second bilingual translator. Discrepancies between the original English version and the back-translated English version were identified, discussed and then necessary modifications made to the translated version. The process was repeated again by another independent bilingual expert to ensure the original and back-translated versions were consistent. As an alternative to discussion during the translation and back-translation process, Lee, Jones, Mineyama and Zhang (2002) pre-tested and conducted interviews to investigate reasons for low cross-language correlation and then continued the translation/back-translation process until agreement was reached. Some of my early interviews took on this role of pre-testing. The result was a combination of a word-for-word translation and a translation which included contextual clarification of terms. The paper version of the questionnaire consisted of both the English and Mandarin character versions of the questions.

### **6.5.3 Questionnaire content and item generation**

The questionnaire was slightly different depending on whether the respondent was an employer (5 sections), graduating student (7 sections) or lecturer (6 sections). At the end of each section an opportunity to provide further comment was included. All respondents completed a common first section (A), with questions about self and business or qualifications or course being studied and future aspirations. The second, third and fourth sections (B, C & D) were identical for the three groups of respondents.

The fifth (E) and sixth (F) sections, for graduating students and lecturers, had the same content as the fourth question but the context of the questions differed; the purpose being to determine any connection between the workplace skills and the teaching and learning program. These two questions



asked both groups: “how important is it that the curriculum allows graduating students to develop the skills to...” and then for the students “how frequently do the teachers encourage graduating students to acquire the following skills...” and for the teachers “how frequently do you as the teacher encourage graduating students to acquire the following skills...”. Students had a seventh section (G) which asked the number of semesters they had been studying in Melbourne.

The fifth (H) and last section for employers asked questions about behaviours of recently employed graduates. The statements were not the same as the previous sections in order to confirm responses of previous sections and also, importantly, to represent the genuine behaviours of the workplace.

#### **6.5.3.1 Section B content**

The second section about personal characteristics, important in graduating students, comprised 15 adjectives. These were derived from previous research findings, newspaper articles and early preliminary interviews as noted in Table 70 (Appendix F). Respondents were asked to nominate their top six characteristics for graduating students.

#### **6.5.3.2 Section C content**

The statements in the third section encompassed the particular attributes graduating students perceive as desirable (求职毕业生应). The statements have been derived from previous research as noted in Table 71 (Appendix G).

#### **6.5.3.3 Section D, E and F content**

The statements in the fourth section for all participants and fifth and sixth sections for students and lecturers were derived from previous research and VU’s policy on Graduate Capabilities, as given in Table 72 (Appendix H).

#### **6.5.3.4 Section G content**

The question in the seventh and final section (G) for the graduating students was added as a result of lecturers’ comments about the various transition points for moving from China to Australia for study, effect of length of time in Australia, employment expectations on return to China, and the ongoing literature review. Building on acculturation theory, a study by Chan (1988) found different levels of adaptation to Australian values and aspirations depending on Chinese students’ desire to assimilate and on their time in Australia. Hence graduating students were requested to:

**Please circle how many semesters you have been studying in Australia:**

1 semester      2 semesters      3 semesters      4 semesters      5 semesters      6 semesters

#### 6.5.3.5 Section H content

The statements in the 5<sup>th</sup> and final section (H) for the employers were included in order to validate earlier responses. They are derived from questions included in previous sections of the survey (see Table 73, Appendix I).

#### 6.5.4 Data collection

After the first version was created and translated, a small group of English speaking Chinese teachers of the Bachelor of Business, graduating Chinese B Bus students and Chinese employers were the pilot subjects. The purpose was to confirm if the questions conveyed the intended meaning. This process ensured familiarity with the research content and influenced the research design. Thus the outcomes of the pilot, as stated by Yin (2003, p. 79), “help you to refine your data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed” (discussed further in 6.5.4). Where pilot questions were still confusing, the question was either adapted and retested or abandoned and jargon such as “graduate capabilities” was avoided. The translations (see 6.5.2) were extensively reviewed, individually and then collaboratively, by three bilingual teachers for their clarity, cultural and educational meaning. A Likert scale was deemed cross culturally appropriate, as the less confusing option and hence the more robust source of data collection; discussed further in 6.5.5.1).

To address Singh’s (1995) focus on functional and conceptual equivalence and thus enable appropriate and meaningful data to be collected from graduating students, lecturers and employers, the precise wording of the survey questions was tailored for each group. The same invitation letter and explanatory document accompanied each survey and preceded each interview (see Appendix J). Confidentiality and privacy were assured and the Head of School’s phone number was included as a contact point if respondents had queries. Care was taken to ensure that the survey was professionally presented and the interview conducted within the University’s Ethics guidelines.

All surveys contained the following four sections:

- A. Questions asking for background information, unique to each group
- B. Questions about the importance for graduating students to have certain personal characteristics
- C. Questions about the importance for graduating students to have certain broad attributes
- D. Questions about the importance for graduating students to have certain workplace skills

The ‘Lecturer’ and ‘Student’ questionnaires also contained the following two sections:

- E.. Questions about the teaching and learning program

F. Questions about the frequency of encouraging students to acquire certain skills

The 'Student' survey contained a seventh section:

G. Question about the number of semesters spent studying in Australia

The 'Employer' questionnaire contained a fifth section:

H. Questions seeking information about behaviour and attitudes of recent employed graduates

Exploratory interviews were conducted to inform the survey questions and more formal interviews after the analysis of the data to further validate the findings. The interview process is discussed in 6.6.

#### **6.5.4.1 Pilot study**

A pilot study was conducted to detect any design weaknesses. According to Baumgartner and Strong (1998) the objectives of a pilot study are:

1. To determine whether the questions provide appropriate and needed data;
2. To ensure that the respondents understand the context of questions; and
3. To rectify any ambiguity in both the instructions and questions.

Fink (1995) argues that at least ten people for each population are required for an effective pilot and that the draft questionnaire should be piloted with a similar group to the final sample population. In this research, twelve surveys were distributed to representatives of the sample population: four to graduating students, four to visiting Chinese "joint program" lecturers and four to Chinese employers. Participation was voluntary but due to existing relationships any respondent who was unable to complete the pilot handed it on to a colleague. Within one week six completed surveys were received. While this was less than the desired ten, the feedback from each was clear, could be cross-checked and was incorporated if appropriate. The findings and subsequent modifications to the questionnaire are presented below:

1. Several ideas that participants found confusing were changed. For instance, the lecturers' question "What are your qualifications?" was changed to "What is your highest qualification?" This avoided unnecessary data and the expense of paying for more translation than necessary.
2. One student complained about the questionnaire length: "it will take a long time to answer so many questions". The researcher then raised this issue with the other five respondents but none considered the length an issue. She also asked what questions could be omitted to which

there was no consensus. However the length may explain the 50 per cent return rate. Even so, the researcher did not change the length of the questionnaire.

3. The presentation of the survey was amended, and divided clearly into sections and subsections. But there was a further request for the font size to be slightly larger and important words bolded. Therefore, font size was increased to 11 points and, in consultation with informants, key words agreed on and bolded.
4. Employers and lecturers raised several questions about professional development, often regarded as training conducted by the Chinese Ministry of Education or professional industry bodies. In order to achieve a wider understanding the words "...further courses or..." were added.
5. The piloted questionnaire contained a five-point Not Important to Highly Important scale. On reviewing the spread of answers and a marked tendency to be neutral, and following further review of relevant literature, this centre-point was removed (see 6.5.5.1) (Chang 1994; Hu & Korllos 1995; Lee et al. 2002).

The next iteration of the draft questionnaire was electronically sent to four colleagues in China with an email explaining the nature and objectives of the research. A follow-up internet phone conversation with each colleague led to two instructional changes and the inclusion of the section G question. Apart from these changes, the questionnaire was now acceptable and likely to produce reliable and valid data. Combined feedback on the two drafts meant that ten people who resemble the sample population had piloted the survey.

### **6.5.5 Measurement**

Measurement refers to the scales and scaling technique used in measuring concepts, plus the assessment of reliability and validity of the measure used. Scaling techniques allow responses to be combined into one indicator. Cavana et al.(2001) describe ten rating scales often used in business research, and five of these were considered.

In this study, Section B used a Dichotomous Scale which allowed multiple selections but to a maximum of six responses. For Sections C, D, E, F and H, the Likert scale was selected for several reasons. First, it yields interval data, hence responses to Likert-type items can be analysed with more influential statistical tests than nominal-dichotomous items. In addition, while it allows respondents some freedom, they should find the questions relatively easy to complete. Finally, for the respondents as well as for the researcher it may increase the comparability of responses to different questions (Babbie 2007).

#### *6.5.5.1 Likert scale*

Responses to the statements in sections C, D, E, F and H were originally based on a Likert scale of (1) to (5), but changed to a base of (1) to (4) where (1) indicated not important or not frequently and (4) indicated high importance or high frequency. Just as Chen and Peng (2008, p. 70) used one standard deviation above the mean as a cut-off point “to ensure that the items had a clear positive or negative connotation, leaving little room for equivocal interpretations”, the Likert scale used in the research had no midpoint thus requiring the respondents to commit to one side or the other. This approach reflected that of Hu and Korllos (1995, p. 65) who explained:

Respondents answered single-item questions using a Likert-type scale with the choices: "strongly agree", "agree", "disagree", "strongly disagree". The actual coding of responses was done by converting the scale into two choices: "agree" and "disagree". Frequencies were converted to percentages for analysis. The exploratory nature of the study and the limited sample led to the decision to limit the statistical analysis to a simplified format. It was felt that this approach would sufficiently allow us to distinguish between two groups of respondent.

The approach was also considered to be culturally appropriate, given the conclusion by Lee et al. (2002, p. 303) that “Japanese and Chinese were more likely to choose the midpoint of a Likert scale item than Americans” but added: “we found this effect only for items involving expression of positive feelings”. It was not known which items would fall into this category in the current research and hence the more valid approach was used to prevent a midpoint response. Chen, Lee and Stevenson (1995) proposed a cultural reason based on response patterns reflecting the collectivism–individualism dimension; an individualistic person willing to use the ends of the scale, but a collectivist person preferring a response closer to that of the group. Anecdotally the researcher was told by both a Chinese lecturer and a Chinese employer that Chinese people, when they are assured of anonymity, are more inclined to use the extremes of a Likert scale.

Lee et al. (2002, p. 303) also found “Japanese respondents reporting more difficulty in completing Likert items than Chinese or Americans. Yet Chinese were more likely to skip items”. This “skipping” suggests that Chinese respondents might be concerned about the possible interpretations of their responses. It may be an issue of face; if they choose the “wrong” answer either they lose face for being wrong or they cause the researcher to lose face. Both outcomes could have negative consequences. The implications for this research are that the researcher’s relationship and concomitant trustworthiness, in this case of ensuring anonymity, is vital to the reliability and validity of the data collected.

Having determined that an even point scale was appropriate, the number of points was still an issue. More categories (points) may give finer distinction but are also more confusing. Chang (1994) separated trait and method variance and found lower internal reliability in a 6-point agree/disagree scale than in a 4-point scale, but no difference between the scales in terms of criterion-related reliability. He argued that respondents need greater knowledge on the topic in question if they are to effectively discern the finer distinctions allowed by the use of a 6-point scale (Chang 1994, p. 213) but also acknowledged “The issue of selecting 4- versus 6-point scales may not be generally resolvable, but may rather depend on the empirical setting” (Chang 1994, p. 205). Given that these concepts were new to the respondents, a 4 point scale was considered to provide adequate distinction.

Finally, the use of category names may confound the respondents and not readily be interpreted as intervals of equidistance, an essential supposition if parametric statistics are to be used. Cummins and Gullone (2000) support no labelling but also suggest that the problem may be alleviated by reducing the number of points and consistent use of terms. Where appropriate the same terms were used in this survey. Coding of terms to numbers for statistical analysis was performed after data collection. This avoided possible confusion of Likert scale numbers with question numbers and the tendency of some Chinese people to select a large number thinking it better than a small one (Qiu 2000, p. 116).

### 6.5.6 Implementation

Neuman (2007) regards the survey as the most used data gathering technique in the social sciences and related fields. The usual techniques for administering them are: 1) telephone interview (Neuman 2006), 2) face to face interviews (Babbie 2007), 3) Web survey (Babbie 2007; Neuman 2006), and 4) mail and Self-Administered Questionnaires (Neuman 2006). Two mail techniques for a Self-Administered Questionnaire were initially chosen for reaching employers for the reasons outlined below:

1. Researcher can mail questionnaires directly to participants who read instructions and questions, then enter their answers;
2. It is a cheap, easy to conduct by a single researcher technique;
3. It is anonymous and overcomes interviewer bias; and
4. Mail surveys allow the time and opportunity for participants to consider their responses.

The first mailout contained a written, bilingual explanation and a link to an English language only web version of the survey. It was mailed to a database of 372 Chinese accountants in Beijing. No complete or partial web responses were received. Six letters were returned to sender marked “address unknown”. A second mailout to every second person on the database (183) with the full paper version of the survey and addressed and unpaid return envelopes was sent two months later. No

responses were received. This supports the issues of conducting international research discussed previously. In this case the researcher was aware that the internet in China was unreliable, slow, and played a lesser role for many people due to sharing of computers (VU 2005), as well as the importance of relationships for meaningful feedback, but undervalued their significance.

The researcher had further discussion with the key informants and a second, more culturally appropriate approach was tried. Firstly, to enhance the creditability of the researcher, both the cover letter (containing an invitation to participate and explanation of research) and questionnaire were printed on university letterhead and was worded to convey the importance of the research to the university. This strategy followed the approach of Qiu (2000) who argued that it was consistent with the respect for authority and status held by many Chinese. Secondly, Cavana et al. (2001) found that the response rate increased when the researcher was involved in the administration the questionnaire. Thus, the researcher endeavoured to be available when the questionnaire was distributed to signify its importance and to provide clarification if required. After consultation with the Australian Chamber of Commerce in Beijing (AustCham), I received introductions to 14 of their members which led to the completion of 12 surveys by employers. The other nine completed surveys were the result of “snowballing”; that is, suggestions and connections made by the AustCham members. The target group remained constant: Chinese employers of recent graduates with a Bachelor of Business qualification from Australia or China.

For the students in Melbourne and China, the paper survey was distributed to final year Chinese students at a morning lecture and a collection point was nominated where the completed surveys could be handed in anonymously throughout the day. The lecturers made positive comments, encouraging the students to complete the survey. Importantly, the survey was not submitted in the presence of the lecturers and it was made clear that completing the survey was not linked to success in the subject or course.

Lecturers in China of the VU Bachelor of Business received the survey during a weekly staff meeting in China. Completed surveys were left in the staffroom for the researcher to collect. Lecturers in China of non-VU programs were all Chinese lecturers visiting VU Melbourne on short-stay Study Tours. The survey was part of their “Welcome Package” and the Chinese agent collected and then returned completed surveys to the researcher.

Having gathered data from a representative sample of the population, the next action was to undertake the survey data analysis.

### 6.5.7 Analysis of survey data

Cavana et al. (2001) argued that there is a process for effective analysis of quantitative data: 1) arranging data, 2) getting to know the data, 3) testing the goodness of data and 4) testing the hypotheses. In the first instance irregularities that can be logically corrected should be (Cavana et al. 2001). In this study, in-house editing was carried out to check for errors and omissions in the questionnaires, subsequently a few minor adjustments were made to ensure the data was more complete, readable and consistent before coding. Only with the graduating students and only in four cases was there a blank response and the computer discounted it. As the number of missing values was less than 15 per cent of the sample, Cavana et al (2001) permit this approach which is more appropriate than the alternatives (assigning the midpoint, mean of respondent's responses, mean of all respondents' responses, random assignment).

Given internet access and, if internet access was not the issue, then engagement with a web survey, the paper based responses had to be converted to electronic data. To avoid errors and omissions the researcher entered the data manually. Then the standard deviation, range, mean, and variance were used to provide an overview of how effective the items and measures were and how respondents perceived questionnaire items.

**Table 21 Summary of measured variables and score ranges that comprise the data file**

Survey question number/s & respondents	Code in SPSS	Variable	No. of items	Scoring Choice	Respondents
1 – 4 Students	A1 – A4	Self and future	4	Open and closed questions	Students
1 – 4 Lecturers	A1 – A4	Self and career	4	Open and closed questions	Lecturers
1 – 6 Employers	A1 – A6	Self and business	6	Open and closed questions	Employers
5 Students, Lecturers; 7 for Employers	B1 – B16	Personal characteristics	16	Multiple selection but limited to 6	Students, Lecturers, Employers
6 Students, Lecturers; 8 for Employers	C1 – C14	General graduate attributes	14	Ordinal: Not important, slightly important, quite important, highly important	Students, Lecturers, Employers
7 Students, Lecturers; 9 for Employers	D1 – D23	Workplace skills	23	Ordinal: Not important, slightly important, quite important, highly important	Students, Lecturers, Employers
8 Students, Lecturers	E1 – E23	Curriculum focus	23	Ordinal: Not important, slightly important, quite important, highly important	Students, Lecturers
9 Students, Lecturers	F1 – F23	Teaching focus	23	Ordinal: Not at all, sometimes, often, always	Students, Lecturers
10 Students (Only	G1	Semesters studying in	1	Choice of 1 – 6 semesters	Only International



International Chinese students studying and surveyed in Australia)		Australia			Chinese students studying and surveyed in Australia
10 Employers	H1 – H14	Employed graduates skills and attributes	14	Ordinal: Not important, slightly important, quite important, highly important	Employers

Integrity of data was tested through reliability and validity measures as presented in 6.7. Hypothesis testing was performed to explain any variance in the dependent variables. The results are presented in Chapters Seven and Eight (for the education and business perspectives respectively). Table 28 summarises the measured variables and score ranges that comprise the data file which consists of the scores each graduate, lecturer and employer gave to each item within each variable. The background and demographic responses to Section A were reviewed and collated to establish commonalities within the respondent groups.

Determining the six most frequently selected personal characteristics was a matter of combining all responses and totalling the frequency for each characteristic. Six characteristics were required as an early research design incorporated conjoint analysis - effective when there are four to six characteristics - to verify the critical characteristics. With lack of access to employers to perform conjoint analysis, a visual scree approach was employed to determine the most important factors (Nasser, Benson & Wisenbaker 2002). Those characteristics that clustered at the top of the frequency table were considered the most important and those characteristics that clustered at the bottom the less important. There was no arbitrary cut off point and no predetermined number of characteristics sought; hence the differing numbers of characteristics in Tables 31, 32 and 45. Both ends of the spectrum were analysed to avoid understatement of factors (Mudrack 2005, p. 819) and to allow the researcher to identify any further consistencies. It should be noted that the reliability of this, as with all approaches that try to generalise or determine patterns, is low when the sample size is low.

For the sets of questions with multiple items rated on a Likert scale, it was possible to assign values of 1 to 4 respectively to the importance rating; the same assigning of values was made to the set of questions which had a frequency rating. The mean for each item within a question set could then be commented on as well as the pattern of distribution. Cross tabulations were carried out and the Mann-Whitney test of significance applied.

The study used the statistical software, SPSS Version 15.0, for analysis of each section of the questionnaire. The frequencies showed the highest and lowest scores for each factor and from them, where applicable, Mann-Whitney t-tests were used to determine difference between samples. This is a non-parametric test for two independent groups on ordinal dependent measures. The quantitative

research results are presented in tables and discussed in Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine. Data from each group of lecturers and each group of students was analysed separately. As there were few significant differences between the sub-groups, the combined lecturer and graduating student data were compared statistically, where appropriate. The employer dataset consisted of too few respondents from the various business categories to look internally for statistical differences for the responses to the personal characteristics, attributes and workplace skills. Obtaining a dataset large enough to analyse the data according to management level, experience, size of organisation or business description is the focus for a future study.

#### **6.5.8 Sample size**

The sample consisted of: 21 Chinese employers, 17 Chinese teachers of the VU B Bus degree, 29 Chinese teachers of a comparable Chinese business qualification, 50 graduating Chinese students in China, and 96 graduating Chinese students in Melbourne.

### **6.6 Research instrument (2) – semi-structured interviews**

Redding (2002; 2005) discusses how authority is embedded in complex structures of culture, social and human capital and claims that “thick descriptions” (Geertz 1973) potentially from interviewing, are needed to describe differences that are inadequately represented in “thin” data as obtained, for example, from survey scales. In fact both methods are simply different ways of looking at the situation and have their own strengths and limitations; used in tandem they promote triangulation. A personal interview with Chinese people, if the necessary rapport is established, can also reveal information that may not be otherwise elicited (Huang 1996). Therefore, to develop and test statements and questions used in the questionnaire process and also to enhance and support information gathered through the questionnaire process and investigate further the importance of the context and attitudinal data, a semi structured interview approach was adopted at several critical points.

Exploratory interviews were a preliminary as well as ongoing aspect of the research. The interviews varied from 30 minutes to two hours and took place via internet video conferencing or face-to-face meetings at a time that suited the interviewee (but limited to when the researcher was in China). More formal but still semi structured interviews which included an introduction, general information and key research questions were also conducted. Importantly, the interviews provided interviewees with an opportunity to express an opinion, as well as give feedback, and respond in their own way (Zikmund 2003).

As often requested, when there was no interpreter present and the interviews took place in the interviewee's second or third language, the interview questions were emailed in advance. Particularly for Chinese employers, questions were tailored to the business, such as "what skills are needed by your [insert organisation name]?" "What skills does [insert organisation name] look for in a new graduate?" Unfortunately, while costs can now be reduced with internet videoconferencing, the time required for organizing, conducting and analyzing interviews is extensive.

### **6.6.1 Analysis of interview data**

The initial exploratory interviews focused on the value and meaning of the 26 attributes of Peppas and Yu (2005). It was a group interview conducted in Melbourne in English with a visiting Study Tour of 14 Chinese business discipline lecturers from Gansu province. The purpose was to ascertain a relevance ranking of these attributes in a Chinese employment environment from a teacher's perspective, which Peppas and Yu had not undertaken. The attributes were introduced to the visiting teachers as a ranking exercise of selection criteria, based on their perceptions of the Chinese employers' requirements. The diversity of the feedback via an interpreter, such as questions about definitions, confirmed that the survey had to be presented bilingually and in phrases rather than isolated words. The lack of oral agreement in ranking the criteria confirmed that experience of workplaces was both limited and unique to each of them. One highly disputed criterion was "Age"; The explanation given was that within the teaching profession it was acceptable for a leader to be older, but within the classroom, youth was preferred to experience. Yet in other workplaces with which these teachers were familiar, they considered that youth would be regarded as naïve.

The interviews after the survey data was collected took place with eight lecturers and 16 employers, all of whom had completed the survey. The questions were contextualised and personalised based on those approved in the Ethics application (see Appendix J, Attachment E4).

The interview method produced qualitative data that verified the conceptual model, the selection of variables, and the researcher's understanding of the importance of the context. According to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 9), qualitative data requires some processing before it can be extensively analysed and conclusions drawn and "raw field notes need to be transcribed, edited, and corrected". A matrix construction as recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994) was employed as a systematic approach to analysing qualitative data. For the purpose of analysis of this research, interview responses were interpreted and translated during the interview process, discussed with the interviewee/s for clarification and correction and later analysed for themes particularly focusing on language use to ascertain the most understandable terminology, and cultural and contextual perspectives.

## 6.7 Limitations

While some changes were made to the interview questions to allow for the different perspectives, more open ended questions and face to face interviews could have clarified written expressions and personal understandings of closed questions. Hills and Thom (2005, p. 332) argue that students and teachers do not always view or describe “the same phenomenon in the same terms”, which became apparent through the interviews with lecturers.

Conducting research internationally and cross-culturally is more complex than conducting it locally, and knowing how, when and what to contextualise may overcome potential issues. Methods of data collection are a relevant example from the current research; it is not necessary to employ the same techniques in all research locations if alternative techniques with comparable levels of reliability are more valuable: a mailed survey might have an agreed level of reliability in one country that is comparable to the reliability of face to face interviews in another country (Douglas & Craig 1983). In China it is clear to this researcher that a personally delivered survey is likely to be responded to and then produce more reliable data than a mailed one.

Also, while transferability of results might be limited, validity of the process has been assured through contextualisation of the research. The constraint of the methodology has been the existence of transferability issues related to human nature. Very few contexts are static, particularly in China, and the accuracy of any description is attenuated by time and the extent to which each context changes.

## 6.8 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are fundamental quality issues in social research and should be extensively analysed in research projects. Babbie (2007, p. 143) defines reliability as “the quality of measurement method that suggests that the same data would have been collected each time in repeated observations of the same phenomenon”. If the assessment tools used to test the hypothesis are not reliable and valid the researcher may incorrectly support or reject the research hypothesis. For cross-checking the reliability of measures, social researchers have developed the quantitative techniques of Test-Retest, Split-Half method and Using Established Measures (Neuman 2007). Established measures were appropriate to this study because items came from measures and questions adopted from previous studies that had already proved their reliability.

The validity of measures is tested mostly via face validity, content validity, criterion related validity and construct validity (Cavana 2001). Using a combination of data types and sources increases validity, as the strengths of one can balance the weaknesses of another. Face validity means that the competencies, or in this case, characteristics, attributes and workplace skills, themselves feel accurate

and appropriate, as judged by the research participants. For any particular competency model, content and face validity are essentially subjective judgements and in the workplace those most able to judge are sometimes those whose role is being mapped to a competency model. In this light recently employed graduates and the employers would be the best to judge.

In quantitative analysis, validity depends on ensuring that the instrument used can measure effectively; the same applies for qualitative analysis (Patton 1990, p. 14). More specifically, “Construct validity involves the network of associations between a supposed construct and other constructs predicted by theory about the construct” (Lee et al. 2002, p. 300). Lee et al. (2002, p. 295) found “Construct validity of the scale tended to be better for the Chinese and the Americans when there were four response choices and for the Japanese when there were seven”. Clearly all possible constructs should be acknowledged although it may be impossible to break down a competency into an exhaustive list of constructs. Shippmann et al. (2000) emphasised that organisations have implemented competency models without validation, even though organisations wish to encourage normative behaviours. They also noted that construct validity should have predictive value. Later, Markus, Cooper-Thomas and Allpress (2005, p. 119) identified construct validity issues with the Competency Approach, particularly as competencies can be hard to observe and hence measure. They cite as examples studies where managers could not describe all the competencies required for a role. This suggests that competency models will always be incomplete: “Certainly the few behavioural statements in most generic competency models could not be regarded as exhaustive” (Markus et al. 2005, p. 19).

In this research, to address Patton’s assertion that a “multimethod, triangulation approach to fieldwork increases both the validity and the reliability of evaluation data” (1990, p. 245), construct validity was built into the survey questions by rephrasing several items and by repetition of items in different sections (for example Section H). The interviews offered question flexibility and comprehensive insights but were fewer in number and subject to interviewer and interviewee perceptions and biases. Documents, such as Chinese newspapers and websites, provided background information but could have been incomplete, inaccurate, inconsistent and biased. However, with feedback from earlier research and input from key informants, the measurement tool was modified and the researcher achieved a degree of confidence with the content validity.

## 6.9 Summary

As mentioned in Chapter One and demonstrated in Chapters Two, Three and Four, there is extensive data on graduate skills in the United Kingdom, The United States and Australia but very little on Chinese graduates seeking employment in China. This gap in the research led to the current study which presents original empirical data. The research tools include a survey of Human Resource

Managers in China who employ new Bachelor of Business graduates, a survey of Chinese lecturers involved with the Bachelor of Business curriculum, a survey of Chinese Bachelor of Business undergraduate students, a detailed case study of a transnational educational partnership, and a series of in-depth interviews with employers and teachers.

This chapter thoroughly explored the research design of the study, focussing on the theoretical implication and justification of the method selected and operationalising components from the conceptual model. This included the sampling, data gathering techniques, ethical matters, questionnaire design, interview procedure, reliability and validity, and data analysis methods. Using a mixed method design, the researcher collected quantitative and qualitative data by interview, survey and case study tools. This data starts to make explicit the skills being developed in the B Bus qualification and the skills required by employers in China.

Chapters Seven and Eight analyse the data obtained from graduates, lecturers and employers and interpret the findings in relation to the aims of the study.

## Chapter Seven Transnational data: VU/LU and what the Chinese graduating students and lecturers said

### 7.0 Introduction

Chapter Three discussed the drivers and directions of education and particularly higher education in China. These are “big picture” ideas and in a country as vast and diverse as China are subject to varied interpretations and manifestations which result in unique local contexts and practices. What follows in this chapter is my research into one transnational partnership between one Australian university and one university in north-eastern China and its particular process of internationalisation. It reviews the development and delivery of the VU Bachelor of Business curriculum in a specific transnational context, enabling preliminary responses to some of the research questions which are then more fully answered through the survey and interview data collected from graduates, lecturers and employers. The case study has been constructed from the author’s teaching experience and collaborative research (Henderson, McWilliams & Xing 2011) at Liaoning University (LU), formal Victoria University and Liaoning University documentation, surveys and interviews. The research questions – “*What characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills being developed in the B Bus curriculum are particularly valued by Chinese employers?*” and “*What characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills are valued by Chinese employers but not developed or included in the B Bus curriculum?*” - are utilised in this chapter to explore:

1. Can Chinese ‘graduate attributes’ be inferred from the Chinese lecturer’s teaching practices of the VU Bachelor of Business?
2. Does having joint teaching arrangements contribute to a bilateral process of internationalisation?
3. What are the perceived requirements of the B Bus curricula taught in Australia and China that ensure Chinese students will meet the requirements of employers in China?

Following the case study, the data from the graduates and lecturers is analysed and some emerging insights to the questions and the process of internationalisation posed.

### 7.1 Structure of the degree

Since 2008 the VU Bachelor of Business course structure, as taught in Australia, has comprised seven core subjects which serve as introductory subjects to discipline fields, three core sequential professional development subjects and fourteen other subjects chosen by students for personal career reasons or to meet the educational requirements of particular professional bodies. A work placement program is optional and, if chosen, may extend the completion time of the degree.

According to the VU Faculty of Business and Law's Centre for Work Integrated Learning, a 12-month work placement in industry during a student's course may have significant skill development implications. To maximise the learning experience there should be skill development in preparation for the work placement as well as on-the-job skill development. The preparatory skill development should be evident in the curriculum documents and in the workplace is assessed through written reflections by each student and varies with individual experience.

In Australia curriculum development responsibility sits below Faculty level and is often a Subject (also known as Unit of Study) Coordinator's responsibility. This person is usually the main lecturer for the subject. Most universities in Australia offer the Bachelor of Business as a full-time three-year course or up to six years, if students take reduced loads.

In China in 2008 the Victoria University Bachelor of Business was only offered as a full time course, there was a smaller range of specialised subjects and no formally embedded and integrated work placement program. Curriculum development by partner teaching staff, particularly in the form of local examples and case studies, is theoretically encouraged.

The course objectives of the Bachelor of Business (Accounting) (Victoria University 2008e, p. 9) are: "to equip students with the necessary skills to perform a wide range of accounting activities in addition to developing a sound business education". Whitefield (2003) argued that these "necessary skills" involve the development of personal and interpersonal skills in addition to content-based cognitive skills. She described how cognitive abilities are assessed through examination, tutorial and assignment work, but concluded that the extent of personal and interpersonal skills development evidenced by students was not regarded as important by students or academics. The current thesis builds on Whitefield's 2003 findings and aims to identify if there are differences in the skill requirement and development as perceived by employers, graduates and lecturers in China.

## **7.2 Case study: an educational partnership between one Chinese and one Australian university**

In 1999 Liaoning University and Victoria University established a joint college, Asia-Australia Business College (AABC) (Liaoning University 2006), to teach international business and international accounting. In 2008 the four year program consisted of two years of English language and a Diploma of Business followed by two years of Bachelor of Business subjects. The College started with an educational pattern of 2 + 2 with the first two years of study at Liaoning University, Liaoning, and the second two years at Victoria University, Melbourne.



Subsequent iterations of agreements have seen the initial 2+2 model become 3+1 and now it is 4+0 plus all previous options. If students move to Melbourne for part of the program then there are significant living and travel expenses. Even so, in 1999 the joint LU / VU program started with 70 students. These numbers have increased to approximately 3000 annually (Victoria University 2009). In 2001 the first group of students from LU came onshore to Melbourne to study. Partly due to cost, English levels, personal preference and often incomplete understanding of the employment opportunities both in Australia and in China, students and parents make decisions about where the study should take place. In interviews conducted onshore soon after arrival, LU students predominantly mention that they come to Australia if they have the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) score necessary for the appropriate visa and also the financial means (Best, Hajzler & Henderson 2007; Tolman 2009). The actual numbers vary each year but approximately 30 per cent of the LU/VU program students will spend at least two semesters in Australia.

In governance terms, the schedules and agreements are reviewed each year. The commitment in 2003 was for up-to-date facilities for teaching and research and that both universities would assign lecturers of high academic ability with ample professional achievements, good teaching results and high English proficiency to teach the courses. The teaching responsibilities differ for the English language program, Diploma of Business program and Bachelor of Business program but both Chinese and foreign (VU) lecturers should conduct their classes in English and use the latest textbooks in English supplied by Victoria University (Victoria University 2003). For the Bachelor of Business program a group of approximately ten lecturers in Melbourne is responsible for the curriculum content, choice of textbooks, continuous and final assessment, and the face to face delivery of about 25 per cent of the program. Approximately 20 Chinese lecturers at the partner institutions in Liaoning have taught subjects in the Bachelor of Business program.

In reality the qualifications of onshore and offshore teaching staff vary and who teaches may be determined pragmatically by who is available to do the teaching. The quality of teaching and the learning outcomes is directly impacted on by the availability of skilled lecturers. In a similar way, who teaches which aspect of the subject is not fixed. However, there is consensus on roles and duties documented when each agreement is reviewed. Teaching is not conducted only in English; sometimes the students' English comprehension does not make this pedagogically sound. Conversely sometimes the lecturers' English ability makes it pedagogically unsound. While less than 30 per cent of the VU academic staff in the program can speak Mandarin, all of the Chinese lecturers have some English skills. This means that the Chinese lecturers can operate to some degree bilingually which can be valuable at times to assist the students' understanding of a topic (Liu, Zhang & Henderson 2009).

The need for appropriate professional development for all staff, but particularly academic staff involved in this transnational program, has been identified (VU 2005; Zhou 2006a). There are constant tensions between the costs of the program and the time required for the quality desired, relationship building, effective communication and, on another level, mutual respect for alternative knowledge paradigms (VU 2005). This is partly addressed during annual reviews and the annual Teaching and Learning conference that VU convenes with its Chinese partner institutions (Henderson 2009; Henderson & Pearce 2011; Pearce & Henderson 2008, 2009), at which such matters as the offshore implications of new Australian government and VU teaching and learning policies and directions are considered. The most significant of these have been VU's emphasis on its Graduate Capability policy, Learning in the Workplace and Community policy and using internet-based teaching and learning resources. Professional development is also partly addressed through Chinese lecturers visiting, observing and reflecting (Boud 1991) upon the teaching of classes at VU's Melbourne campuses and since 2008 VU has funded small grants for international collaborative research that is undertaken jointly by academics from VU and its partner institutions in China (Henderson 2009). Unfortunately, due to other priorities and lack of staff Mandarin skills, VU discipline lecturers when in China spend little time observing classes, an activity which would promote appreciation of different teaching and learning skills and contribute to the building of a mutually respectful relationship (Hudson & Morris 2003).

The Australian Learning and Teaching Council funded research addressing graduate attributes and professional development for academic staff employed by Australian and partner institutions (see <http://www.altc.edu.au/grants-and-projects>). Leask (2007) most notably has argued strongly for this to be part of the induction required of all staff but prior to that, amongst others, Knight and Trowler (2000) investigated the culture of the academic workplace and Bodycott and Walker (2000) the dissemination of cultural lessons learnt from teaching abroad.

Internationalisation at a curriculum level is ongoing in both universities however it is unlikely that both institutions understand internationalisation of the curriculum in the same way (see 2.4). It is one facet of auditing a university's transnational education arrangements which are "inherently more difficult to control, being at a great distance from the base of the university's operations, embedded in a different culture" (AUQA 2008, p. 1). The internal quality review process at VU operates on a three year cycle and the external process occurs approximately every six years (AUQA 2010). With regard to teaching resources, sometimes these can be modified to suit the offshore students' needs, sometimes to suit the partner teacher's needs. At times the mutual understanding of teaching and learning equivalence allows for content modification by a partner but seldom for assessment changes, as comparable outcomes need to be assured when the same qualification is awarded in a number of locations. While it may be understood that the resources are not quite appropriate, how and what to

change is not well understood or at times feasible. Ideas such as assessment driven learning (Ramsden 2003) are mutual but what is done varies radically between locations. Similarly, assessment processes and student learning being enhanced through a socially constructed approach (Rust, O'Donovan & Price 2005) and building knowledge about assessment processes, marking criteria and educational standards through the genuine engagement of both students and their educators (Kember & Leung 2005) with graduate attributes are discussed and sometimes acted on, within slow to change institutional constraints.

It is the norm for lecturers at AABC to also teach in other areas of Liaoning University to supplement their income. Hence, because Liaoning University has two campuses, 15 kilometres apart, lecturers may have morning commitments at one campus and afternoon commitments at the other. As few drive or have private cars, most depend on the university shuttle buses, with all commuters restricted by its timetable. Factors such as travel, combined with large class sizes, longer teaching semesters, and different remuneration structure, affect available time for curriculum innovation and research which could inform internationalisation.

It is difficult to analyse the student profile. Liaoning is a relatively wealthy, large urban and industrial centre, north east of Beijing. It is not far from Korea, Japan and Russia and periodically population movement between these countries has occurred. Given that education is concentrated in cities, the students are more likely to be from urban areas. Some students questioned had travelled to Beijing, but most had not and very few had been further afield. Consequently their 'world view' is generally restricted to their geographical locality, education and life experiences. All students enter the program directly from secondary school; there are no mature-age or part-time students. In October 2006 the LU branch of VU's Alumni Association was formed, extending the connection from an institutional to a personal level.

The students' motivation is influenced by their family's ambitions and their own personal goals. According to some of the partnership lecturers, some students attend LU as their second choice after missing out on a place at a more prestigious state higher education institution. But LU is preferable to studying at a state vocational college. For some the opportunity to study for a qualification in English is perceived to enhance employment and further education opportunities. Others are seeking the international business practice knowledge.

As a private international college AABC has more flexibility than a state run college, but this can create problems as well as opportunities. While students may want more creative teaching, they can then find it unstructured and lacking in direction. The diversity of assessment tasks means that excellent memory skills no longer ensure success in assessment. The AABC lecturers at LU would like to introduce seminar-style teaching but large classes, fixed classroom furniture, and a history of

limited classroom discussion are significant challenges. The students are still required to fulfil Chinese higher education requirements (the 'National Curriculum'). Therefore their timetable is crammed with their Victoria University subjects, English language programs and / or IELTS preparation, English for the Chinese College Exam plus compulsory Chinese subjects such as Politics and Physical Education. While a Bachelor of Business student studying at VU in Melbourne may have 12 formal hours of teaching, a student in China may have 30 or more hours. There is little time for the suggested ratio in Australia of three to four hours of independent study for every hour of formal teaching (James, Krause & Jennings 2010), let alone to develop independent learning skills and possibly even less time to discuss or reflect on what is being learnt.

As successful students earn the same VU qualification whether they study in China or Australia, lecturers should have equivalent or comparable (VU 2005) teaching plans, materials, and syllabus, and students should receive the same teaching quality and learning outcomes. Successful students from China or Australia can continue with postgraduate studies at Victoria University, or any other Australian university, and are exempt from an entrance exam<sup>28</sup>, which is not the case when applying to do a Masters qualification at a Chinese university. This is significant and means that the VU Bachelor of Business teaching and learning program does not need to address the extra exam requirements of post graduate study that is required of the Chinese undergraduate courses. This translates to less contact hours for students than Chinese courses and more opportunity to focus on their subjects, as well as on consolidating and broadening graduate capabilities and other soft skills such as independent learning and problem solving within the curriculum.

To answer the first question posed above - "Can Chinese 'graduate attributes' be inferred from the Chinese lecturer's teaching practices of the VU Bachelor of Business?" - the response is "no". Two factors confirm this response: lecturers in China tend to follow a curriculum without significant individual modification and because of other commitments and priorities they have insufficient time to do otherwise. In this case, the Chinese lecturers are teaching as well as they can the VU curriculum with VU's Graduate Capabilities. In relation to the Degree program, VU lecturers fly in for a very short intensive lecture delivery (VU 2005) and then leave further explanations of the theory and practice to local lecturers. This combined with Chinese students' respect for their lecturers, means that local lecturers are critical and significant transmitters of explicit and implicit skills.

The second question - "Does having joint teaching arrangements contribute to a bilateral process of internationalisation?" - is more difficult to answer. The annual VU and Chinese partner institution Teaching and Learning conference aims to develop a shared understanding of VU policies and teaching and learning practices; likewise the introduction of collaborative research projects with VU's

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<sup>28</sup> Australian visas do have a language requirement which may require an examination.

international partners, funded by VU. But the drivers for most communication exchanges are VU's, not Chinese educational policies. There has been a reliance on VU lecturers personally acquiring local knowledge and then for either Chinese or VU lecturers adapting resources to assist the students to understand the VU curriculum. However, this has not occurred systematically or uniformly or been thoroughly evaluated. The Student Evaluation of Teaching which VU requires students to complete at the end of each semester could be modified in order to investigate the question more usefully; at VU the results are provided to individual lecturers as part of their personal professional development. In short, the goals, process and outcomes of internationalising the curriculum are vague. At the same time survey and interview responses suggest a subtle process of internationalisation is happening.

Employers and educators in China seldom formally interact in a workplace setting and therefore asking the question "What are the perceived requirements of the curricula taught in Australia and China that mean that students will meet the requirements of employers in China?" is a focus of this chapter.

The following sections further inform the joint business partnership of teaching and learning outlined above. The perceptions of these university-based, private international college graduating Chinese students and their lecturers to certain personal characteristics, general attributes, workplace skills, the curriculum and teaching, as well as their immediate employment outlook are analysed from survey and interview data.

### **7.3 Profile of graduating students**

Selection criteria for student respondents were that they had to be final year or recently graduated Chinese International students in the VU Bachelor of Business. If they were studying at VU Melbourne they were on a student visa and not a permanent resident, and if they were studying in China then it was with an international partner, namely Victoria University.

Students were aged from 18 to 22 years. All had completed their secondary education in China and English was not their first language. Initially survey data was collected from two groups of students: 49 final semester VU B Bus students at LU (a return rate of 52 per cent) and 63 final semester VU B Bus students in Melbourne (a return rate of 80 per cent). Adaptive Theory allows for further questioning of data. Therefore to ascertain a possible reason for any different responses from the Chinese students in Melbourne, a further question was added about length of time in Australia. This was based on research by Chan (1988) who found different levels of adaptation to Australian values and aspirations depending on Chinese students' desire to assimilate and their time in Australia. Thus Chinese students who see their stay in Australia as temporary are more likely to adhere to entrenched Confucian values and associated academic success behaviours. Furthermore, Guan and Dodder

(1998) found that after two years away from China the values which maintained personal cultural identity changed. When the survey with the extra question was distributed a semester later to the next group of final semester Chinese B Bus students in Melbourne, 33 completed the surveys (a return rate of 35 per cent). The results showed that students had come to Melbourne mostly for two semesters or four plus semesters.

The data was recorded as three separate sub-groups: those for whom length of study in Melbourne was unknown (the original 63 respondents), those students who had been in Melbourne for two semesters or less (8), and those students who had been in Melbourne for four or more semesters (25). No respondents reported that they had been in Melbourne for three semesters. However, the number of responses received after the second distribution of the survey was too small for any meaningful analysis based on length of time. Therefore the three sub-groups were combined, giving 96 Melbourne responses. Responses from Melbourne based Chinese students are identified as “Student Onshore”; China based Chinese students are identified as “Student Offshore”.

### 7.3.1 Graduating students: self and aspirations

Students in Liaoning were mostly completing specialised subjects related to accounting, finance and international trade, while students in Melbourne could select subjects from a wider range of specialisations. However most were specialising in accounting or banking and finance. The open ended questions in this section were analysed for themes. When asked ‘what sort of job do you think you will get when you graduate?’ the responses were predominantly limited to simply repeating their area of specialisation: 11/146 (8 per cent) said they were unsure, 10/146 (7 per cent) specifically mentioned “*foreign*” or “*international*” business and a few mentioned management positions. Additional comments by the graduates included “*no working experience, so it is hard to find job*” (Student Offshore 3), “*white collar*” (Student Offshore 32), and “*employee in state owned business*” (Student Offshore 49).

The outlook was broader and less certain when asked ‘what sort of work do you hope to be doing 5 years from now?’ Only two students actually said they were unsure, ten mentioned working for a foreign or international business, and many mentioned management positions including three who mentioned owning their own company. Additional comments included “*independent worker*” (Student Offshore 46), and “*leader in state owned business*” (Student Offshore 49).

Finally, in response to the question about further courses or professional development programs, most mentioned self-learning, undertaking a Masters qualification (37/146, 25 per cent), preparing for the Certified Practicing Accountant (CPA) (34/146, 23 per cent), practical experience (21/146, 14 per cent) and English language development (9/146, 6 per cent ). Other responses included

“communication, some interpersonal skills” (Student Offshore 10; 20; 46; Student Onshore 13; 96), “Chinese laws and international laws” (Student Offshore 33), “career planning” (Student Offshore 34; Student Onshore 63), “understand the Chinese financial market” (Student Offshore 35), “teamwork spirits and a wide global mindset” (Student Offshore 39), “visiting companies” (Student Offshore 25), “technology” (Student Onshore 79; 58).

## 7.4 Profile of lecturers

Two groups of Chinese lecturers were surveyed. Seventeen Chinese lecturers from Liaoning completed the survey. All had taught or were teaching VU’s Bachelor of Business curriculum to students in China. Twenty-nine Chinese lecturers teaching only Chinese undergraduate degrees in China were also surveyed.

### 7.4.1 Lecturers: self and teaching area

The Chinese lecturers of VU programs in China represented a diverse range of business and economics discipline areas. They were unequally distributed in length of time teaching at the university with most being younger lecturers; all had Bachelor level qualifications and most were undertaking Master level qualifications. One of the 17 (6 per cent) had a Doctorate. The Chinese lecturers of non-VU programs in China also represented a diverse range of discipline areas but overall the group had been teaching for longer and 27 per cent had Doctoral qualifications. See Table 29.

**Table 22 Summary of years teaching**

Years teaching	Non-partner (n=29)	Partner (n=17)
1 -5	30%	47%
6 – 10	40%	20%
11 – 20	27%	13%
More than 20	3%	20%

Themes of responses for further training are provided in Table 30. Percentages are of total responses; some respondents gave more than one answer.

**Table 23 Summary of themes for further training**

	Non-partner	Partner
Government courses / professional development	9= 30%	3= 14%
English language	2= 7%	4= 19%
Overseas experience	4= 13%	3= 14%
Higher qualification	9= 30%	10= 48%
Teaching skills	6= 20%	1= 5%

## 7.5 Personal characteristics

This question asked about the importance for graduating students of certain personal characteristics. Fifteen characteristics were listed and respondents had to select their six most important. Respondents were not asked to rank these.

### 7.5.1 Graduating students

Table 31 details the percentage frequency that students nominated each characteristic. The most important personal characteristics were *cooperation* and *confidence*, with slightly different frequencies between onshore and offshore student data sets. The least important characteristics were *happy* and *enthusiastic*. An independent samples t-test produced only two characteristics for which response frequencies between Liaoning and Melbourne Chinese students were significantly different: *loyal* ( $t=-2.280$ ,  $p=0.025$ ) and *hardworking* ( $t=-2.910$ ,  $p=0.004$ )<sup>29</sup>. Both characteristics were more frequently selected by Chinese students in Melbourne. This difference is discussed in Chapter Nine. In order to provide the overall picture, frequency data from all the students has been combined, as shown in the last column. The frequencies and characteristics which were significantly different between the two groups are **bolded**.

**Table 24 Frequency for which each characteristic was selected by the students**

Chinese students in China (N= 49)		Chinese students in Melbourne(N= 96)		All Chinese students (N= 145)	
cooperative	70.0	cooperative	66.7	cooperative	67.8
positive	62.0	confident	63.5	confident	62.3
confident	60.0	openminded	61.5	openminded	58.9
honest	56.0	honest	58.3	honest	57.5
openminded	54.0	<b>hardworking</b>	<b>54.2</b>	positive	54.8
respectful	38.0	positive	51.0	hardworking	52.1
friendly& outgoing	38.0	<b>loyal</b>	<b>49.0</b>	loyal	42.5
<b>hardworking</b>	<b>30.0</b>	respectful	39.6	respectful	39.0
<b>loyal</b>	<b>30.0</b>	friendly & outgoing	33.3	friendly & outgoing	34.9
mature	30.0	punctual	30.2	punctual	27.4
assertive	28.0	assertive	21.9	assertive	24.0
risk taker	22.0	mature	17.7	mature	21.9
punctual	22.0	risk taker	9.4	risk taker	13.7
enthusiastic	18.0	enthusiastic	8.3	enthusiastic	11.6
happy	16.0	happy	8.3	happy	11.0

### 7.5.2 Lecturers

With regard to the importance of graduating students having certain personality attributes, there was significant overlap between the two groups when the frequency for each attribute was ranked.

<sup>29</sup> For the characteristics that were returned as significant using Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, the t-value for "equal variances not assumed" was interpreted.



Comparing the rankings of the top three most important characteristics nominated by the two groups of Chinese lecturers, the order is different but two were nominated by both groups - *hardworking* and *cooperative*. Comparing the three least importantly ranked, again the order was slightly different but the characteristics nominated were the same, namely *happy*, *risk taker*, *assertive* and *mature*. Table 32 summarises the rankings of personal characteristics for the two lecturer groups, separately and combined.

**Table 25 Characteristics nominated as important by the lecturers**

Most important – Chinese lecturers of VU programs in China (n=17)	Most important – Chinese lecturers of <b>non</b> -VU programs in China (n=29)	Most important – <b>All</b> Chinese lecturers (n=46)
hardworking	cooperative	cooperative
confident; cooperative	hardworking	hardworking
honest; positive	confident	confident
Least important – Chinese lecturers of VU programs in China	Least important – Chinese lecturers of <b>non</b> -VU programs in China	Least important – <b>All</b> Chinese lecturers
risk taker	happy	risk taker
mature; assertive	risk taker	happy
happy	assertive; mature	assertive; mature

## 7.6 General attributes

Question 6 asked about the importance of certain attributes in graduating students. Fourteen attributes were listed and respondents had to rate each one as “Not Important”, “Slightly Important”, “Quite Important” or “Highly Important”.

### 7.6.1 Graduating students

The cross-tabulation of responses of Liaoning and Melbourne students provided varied patterns of results. Only *involvement in community activities* was significant ( $U=1750$ ,  $p=0.006$ ) at a 5 per cent level of significance, with Liaoning students perceiving it as more important. Table 33 shows the percentages resulting from the cross tabulation and the significance level for the Mann-Whitney comparison for each attribute. The unshaded cells are the aggregated percentages for students in Liaoning, the shaded cells for students in Melbourne.

**Table 26 Cross tabulation & Mann Whitney results for importance of general attributes by students**

6. 求职毕业生应: Graduating students should:	不重要 Not Important	较重要 Slightly Important	重要 Quite Important	很重要 Highly Important	Mann-Whitney Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
	Cross tabulation				
参与社会活动，如体育运动，兴趣爱好	0.0%	38.8%	38.8%	22.4%	.006*

be involved in community activities such as sport or hobbies		4.2%	55.2%	31.3%	9.4%	
All		2.8%	49.7%	33.8%	13.8%	
学习成绩优秀		20.4%	36.7%	30.6%	12.2%	
have high marks		9.4%	43.8%	41.7%	5.2%	.528
All		13.1%	41.4%	37.9%	7.6%	
了解本地风俗习惯		4.1%	32.7%	53.1%	10.2%	
know about local customs and traditions		0.0%	33.3%	47.9%	18.8%	.291
All		1.4%	33.1%	49.7%	15.9%	
了解世界政治局势		0.0%	38.8%	49.0%	12.2%	
know about world politics		2.1%	44.8%	42.7%	10.4%	.330
All		1.4%	42.8%	44.8%	11.0%	
了解其他地区的一些风俗		10.2%	55.1%	26.5%	8.2%	
know some of the customs of other places		8.3%	53.1%	35.4%	3.1%	.775
All		9.0%	53.8%	32.4%	4.8%	
毕业于重点院校		20.4%	40.8%	26.5%	12.2%	
come from a good university		32.3%	39.6%	19.8%	8.3%	.098
All		28.3%	40.0%	22.1%	9.7%	
懂得何时服从		2.1%	35.4%	41.7%	20.8%	
know when to conform		6.3%	40.6%	45.8%	7.4%	.068
All		4.9%	38.9%	44.4%	11.8%	
注重人际关系		0.0%	10.4%	56.3%	33.3%	
value relationships		0.0%	9.4%	55.2%	35.4%	.778
All		0.0%	9.7%	55.6%	34.7%	
具有高尚品德		0.0%	14.6%	47.9%	37.5%	
have high morals		0.0%	11.5%	44.8%	43.8%	.434
All		0.0%	12.5%	45.8%	41.7%	
意识到个人行为对习惯和传统的影响		8.2%	34.7%	40.8%	16.3%	
be aware of the impact of their actions on customs and traditions		1.1%	31.6%	51.6%	15.8%	.266
All		3.5%	32.6%	47.9%	16.0%	
具有责任心		0.0%	10.4%	41.7%	47.9%	
show commitment		1.1%	2.1%	37.9%	58.9%	.133
All		0.7%	4.9%	39.2%	55.2%	
注重谐调统一		.0%	16.7%	56.3%	27.1%	
value harmony		1.1%	16.0%	52.1%	30.9%	.771
All		0.7%	16.2%	53.5%	29.6%	
乐于尝试新事物，接受新挑战		4.2%	18.8%	41.7%	35.4%	
show a willingness to try new ideas / tasks		2.1%	21.1%	52.6%	24.2%	.380
All		2.8%	20.3%	49.0%	28.0%	

只专注于所分配的工作	27.1%	41.7%	16.7%	14.6%	.682
focus only on the task at hand	26.3%	47.4%	16.8%	9.5%	
All	26.6%	45.5%	16.8%	11.2%	

\* and **bolded** denotes significance at  $p < 0.05$

Statistical analysis may mask other possible interpretations. Therefore the following section presents a verbal analysis that supplements the statistical analysis. The middle column of Table 34 includes aggregated data/results and summarises the importance ratings of certain attributes where a difference can be noted between the two student groups. (N.I. = Not Important, S.I. = Slightly Important, Q.I. = Quite Important, H.I. = Highly Important.)

**Table 27 Summary of raw responses of students and lecturers**

Attribute	Comment / feature of STUDENT responses				Comment / feature of LECTURER responses			
参与社会活动，如体育运动， 兴趣爱好 be involved in community activities such as sport or hobbies	N.I.	S.I.	Q.I.	H.I.	N.I.	S.I.	Q.I.	H.I.
	Total	50%			Total	73% <sup>30</sup>		
	Liaoning	39%		22%	Non-VU	59%		
	Melbourne	55%		9%	VU	47%		
学习成绩优秀 have high marks	N.I.	S.I.	Q.I.	H.I.	No lecturer regarded this as “Not Important”. Non-VU lecturers responded much more in the “Slightly” and “Quite Important” categories, VU lecturers were evenly distributed among the “Slightly”, “Quite” and “Highly Important” categories			
	Total							
	Liaoning	20%		31%				
	Melbourne	10%		42%				
了解本地风俗习惯 know about local customs and traditions					N.I.	S.I.	Q.I.	H.I.
	Total				Total	81%		
					Non-VU	30%		13%
					VU	53%		0%
了解世界政治局势 know about world politics					N.I.	S.I.	Q.I.	H.I.
	Total				Total			
					Non-VU	21%	45%	
					VU	0%	65%	
了解其他地区的一些风俗 know some of the customs of other places					N.I.	S.I.	Q.I.	H.I.
	Total				Total	80%		
					Non-VU	31%		10%
					VU	18%		24%
毕业于重点院校 come from a good university	N.I.	S.I.	Q.I.	H.I.	N.I.	S.I.	Q.I.	H.I.
	Total	68%			Total	72%		
	Liaoning	20%			Non-VU	30%	43%	
	Melbourne	32%			VU	59%	12%	
懂得何时服从 know when to conform	N.I.	S.I.	Q.I.	H.I.	N.I.	S.I.	Q.I.	H.I.
	Total				Total	70%		
	Liaoning			21%	Non-VU	30%	37%	
	Melbourne			7%	VU	18%	47%	
具有高尚品德 have high morals					N.I.	S.I.	Q.I.	H.I.
					Total		89%	
					Non-VU		27%	63%

<sup>30</sup> Combined percentages are represented by their placement between the relevant combined headings.

		VU	41%	47%
意识到个人行为对习惯和传统的影响 be aware of the impact of their actions on customs and traditions	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total Liaoning 41% Melbourne 52%	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 83% Non-VU 55% 24% VU 29% 59%		
注重谐调统一 value harmony		N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 81% Non-VU 17% 37% VU 6% 53%		
乐于尝试新事物，接受新挑战 show a willingness to try new ideas / tasks	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total Liaoning 42% 35% Melbourne 53% 24%	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 0% 77% Non-VU 13% 43% VU 41% 24%		
只专注于所分配的工作 focus only on the task at hand		N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 75% Non-VU 40% 37% VU 6% 65%		

Chinese students at both locations answered similarly to the importance of:

- *Knowing about local customs and traditions*
- *Knowing about world politics*
- *Knowing about some of the customs of other places*
- *Valuing relationships*
- *Having high morals*
- *Showing commitment*
- *Valuing harmony*
- *Focusing only on the task at hand*

Given the similarity of the response patterns of Chinese Graduating Students from both locations, it is interesting to note for which attributes the pattern is more distinctive and for which response the greatest similarity occurs. For example for:

- *Knowing about local customs* – 83 per cent per cent of all responses are clustered in the middle; 16 per cent noted it as “Highly Important”
- *Knowing about world politics* – 87 per cent of all responses are clustered in the middle; 11 per cent noted it as “Highly Important”
- *Knowing about some of the customs of other places* – 63 per cent of the students rated this attribute as “Not Important” or “Slightly Important”; alternatively it could be noted that 86 per cent responded in the mid-range
- *Valuing relationships* – 90 per cent of all students said it was “Quite” or “Highly Important”
- *Having high morals* - 88 per cent of all students said it was “Quite” or “Highly Important”
- *Showing commitment* – 94 per cent of all students said it was “Quite” or “Highly Important”

- *Valuing harmony* - 83 per cent of all students said it was “Quite” or “Highly Important”
- *Focusing only on task at hand* – 72 per cent of all noted “Not” or “Slightly Important”.

## 7.6.2 Lecturers

The cross-tabulation of responses of Chinese lecturers of VU programs in China and Chinese lecturers of **non**-VU programs in China provided a different pattern of results. Using Mann-Whitney t-tests none of the differences observed were found to be significant. These are presented in Appendix K. The finding that the non-partner and partner lecturers expressed no difference in the importance of these predominantly extra-curricula attributes is not surprising, given that these context questions are linked to the cultural environment and both groups of lecturers are teaching within the same cultural environment.

The last column of Table 34 above summarises the importance ratings of only the attributes where different response patterns between the two groups of lecturers can be discerned. Chinese lecturers of both VU and non-VU courses answered similarly to the importance of:

- *Value relationships*: 85 per cent of all responses noted it as “Quite” or “Highly Important”
- *Show commitment*: 96 per cent of all responses noted it as “Quite” or “Highly Important”

## 7.7 Workplace skills as an employment need

Question 7 asked about the importance of certain workplace skills in graduating students. Twenty-three skills were presented and respondents had to rate each one as “Not Important”, “Slightly Important”, “Quite Important” or “Highly Important” from their perspective of preparing for employment.

### 7.7.1 Graduating students

Only *use of computers for general office tasks* (U=1741, p=0.008) and *able to write reports* (U=1766, p=0.011) were significant at a 5 per cent level of significance, with Liaoning students perceiving both as more important. Table 35 gives the cross-tabulated percentages for the importance ratings of workplace skills in the context of employment for Chinese students in Melbourne and Liaoning. The last column in the same table shows the resulting significance level for the Mann-Whitney test for each skill.

**Table 28 Cross tabulation and Mann Whitney results for importance of workplace skills by students**

<b>7. 求职毕业生在工作中应能够:</b> <b>Graduating students preparing for employment in the workplace should be able to:</b>	不重要 Not Important	较重要 Slightly Important	重要 Quite Important	很重要 Highly Important	Mann-Whitney Asymp.
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	Cross tabulation				Sig. (2-tailed)
团队合作work in teams	4.1%	8.2%	36.7%	51.1%	.719
	0.0%	11.6%	42.1%	46.3%	
All	1.4%	10.4%	40.3%	47.9%	
思维敏捷think quickly	2.0%	20.4%	46.9%	30.6%	.243
	0.0%	23.2%	60.0%	16.8%	
All	0.7%	22.2%	55.6%	21.5%	
表达个人观点argue for what they think is right	4.1%	18.4%	40.8%	36.7%	.373
	0.0%	15.8%	64.2%	20.0%	
All	1.4%	16.7%	56.3%	25.7%	
善于解决问题solve problems	2.0%	10.2%	55.1%	32.7%	.528
	0.0%	9.5%	53.7%	36.8%	
All	0.7%	9.7%	54.2%	35.4%	
考虑他人意见consider other people's points of view	0.0%	16.3%	53.1%	30.6%	.912
	0.0%	18.1%	51.1%	30.9%	
All		17.5%	51.7%	30.8%	
使用电脑处理一般性工作 use the computer for general office tasks	0.0%	20.4%	42.9%	36.7%	.008*
	3.2%	33.7%	44.2%	18.9%	
All	2.1%	29.2%	43.8%	25.0%	
敢于做决定make decisions	2.0%	16.3%	53.1%	28.6%	.500
	0.0%	19.1%	59.6%	21.3%	
All	0.7%	18.2%	57.3%	23.8%	
书写报告 write reports	6.1%	18.4%	49.0%	26.5%	.011*
	2.1%	45.3%	38.9%	13.7%	
All	3.5%	36.1%	42.4%	18.1%	
尊重同事respect their colleagues	4.1%	14.3%	44.9%	36.7%	.839
	0.0%	13.7%	51.6%	34.7%	
All	1.4%	13.9%	49.3%	35.4%	
应用所学知识apply their knowledge	4.1%	24.5%	46.9%	24.5%	.208
	0.0%	15.8%	57.9%	26.3%	
All	1.4%	18.8%	54.2%	25.7%	
运用中、英文交流communicate in Chinese and English	2.0%	4.1%	51.0%	42.9%	.743
	0.0%	10.5%	47.4%	42.1%	
All	0.7%	8.3%	48.6%	42.4%	
洞察和预见问题notice problems and possibilities as they arise	6.1%	26.5%	46.9%	20.4%	.743
	0.0%	10.5%	47.4%	42.1%	
All	2.1%	25.0%	57.6%	15.3%	
联系不同学科体系make links between different subjects	6.1%	40.8%	28.6%	24.5%	.609
	4.2%	37.9%	50.5%	7.4%	
All	4.9%	38.9%	43.1%	13.2%	
区分工作重点identify the most important tasks	0.0%	20.4%	53.1%	26.5%	.328
	0.0%	23.2%	58.9%	17.9%	
All		22.2%	56.9%	20.8%	
具有独立创新的见解come up with new ideas	0.0%	16.3%	46.9%	36.7%	.383
	0.0%	13.7%	61.1%	25.3%	
All		14.6%	56.3%	29.2%	
服从领导follow directions without question	4.1%	38.8%	44.9%	12.2%	.873

		2.1%	45.3%	37.9%	14.7%	
	All	2.8%	43.1%	40.3%	13.9%	
独立工作work without supervision		.0%	24.5%	55.1%	20.4%	.368
		1.1%	13.7%	64.2%	21.1%	
	All	0.7%	17.4%	61.1%	20.8%	
激励他人motivate others		4.1%	28.6%	49.0%	18.4%	.982
		0.0%	37.9%	40.0%	22.1%	
	All	1.4%	34.7%	43.1%	20.8%	
按期完成工作任务complete tasks within a deadline		0.0%	10.4%	41.7%	47.9%	.940
		0.0%	12.6%	38.9%	48.4%	
	All		11.9%	39.9%	48.3%	
承受压力perform well under pressure		0.0%	20.4%	32.7%	46.9%	.747
		1.1%	9.5%	52.6%	36.8%	
	All	0.7%	13.2%	45.8%	40.3%	
收集相关工作信息gather information		0.0%	20.4%	49.0%	30.6%	.269
		0.0%	24.2%	54.7%	21.1%	
	All		22.9%	52.8%	24.3%	
建立人际关系build relationships		0.0%	8.2%	38.8%	53.1%	.368
		0.0%	10.5%	44.2%	45.3%	
	All		9.7%	42.4%	47.9%	
了解所从事工作的社会价值 see the value of their job outside the workplace		0.0%	29.2%	43.8%	27.1%	.678
		0.0%	27.5%	52.7%	19.8%	
	All		28.1%	49.6%	22.3%	

\* and **bolded** denotes significance at  $p < 0.05$

Of the 23 items, two were statistically significant. The two areas of difference can perhaps be explained by the different foci of the Chinese and Melbourne educational contexts. In Melbourne the computer is central to teaching and learning as an everyday tool: students commonly take them into class, and use them for finding resources, downloading information and sharing ideas. The university has a fast, cheap and easily accessible internet connection. The greater perception of importance by the Liaoning students was investigated in interviews. The response focused on the change from a tool and skill which were previously “Not Important” to their education to a situation in which they are now important, as they undertake the VU qualification in Liaoning and have subjects which require regular online learning activities for in-semester assessments and often online submission. In the same way, in Melbourne writing reports is a common task for different subjects, whereas the Chinese students undertaking the Australian Bachelor of Business in China feel they are the only ones dealing with the frustrations of writing a report. Hence this skill has acquired a “Highly Important” role. Those Chinese students who completed a VU University Preparation program in Melbourne would have considerable practise in writing reports, making it easier to undertake the Bachelor of Business assessment tasks which invariably involve report writing.

The following comments are based on the cross tabulated percentages for each rating for each listed skill by Melbourne students with the Liaoning students as summarised in Table 36 which examines the trends in responses to the same skill statements. Table 36 shows that for 12 of these questions over 80 per cent of all graduating students rated their perception of the following attributes as “Quite” or “Highly Important” in the context of employment:

- *Work in teams*
- *Solve problems*
- *Consider other people's points of view*
- *Make decisions*
- *Respect their colleagues*
- *Apply their knowledge*
- *Communicate in Chinese and English*
- *Come up with new ideas*
- *Work without supervision*
- *Complete tasks within a deadline*
- *Perform well under pressure*
- *Build relationships.*

**Table 29 Summary of lecturers’ and graduating students’ importance ratings of workplace skills in the context of employment.**

Skill	Comment / feature of LECTURER responses – employment context					Comment / feature of STUDENT responses – employment context				
		N.I.	S.I.	Q.I.	H.I.		N.I.	S.I.	Q.I.	H.I.
团队合作 work in teams	Total	0%		96%		Total			88%	
	Non-VU			53%		Liaoning				
	VU			65%		Melbourne				
思维敏捷 think quickly	Total	0%		83%		Total				
	Non-VU			52%	28%	Liaoning		47%	31%	
	VU			71%	18%	Melbourne		60%	17%	
表达个人观点 argue for what they think is right	Total			79%		Total				
	Non-VU		37%		23%	Liaoning		41%	37%	
	VU		47%		12%	Melbourne		65%	20%	
善于解决问题 solve problems	Total	0%		92%		Total			90%	
	Non-VU		3%	43%	53%	Liaoning				
	VU		18%	71%	12%	Melbourne				
考虑他人意见 consider other people's points of view	Total	0%		81%		Total	0%		83%	
	Non-VU		20%	63%		Liaoning				
	VU		35%	41%		Melbourne				
使用电脑处理一般性工作 use the computer for general office tasks	Total			66%		Total				
	Non-VU		37%	30%		Liaoning	20%		37%	
	VU		24%	41%		Melbourne	34%		19%	



敢于做决定 make decisions	Total Non-VU VU	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.	77% 27% 59%	43% 29% 0%	20%
书写报告 write reports	Total Non-VU VU	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.	76% 10% 0%	24% 71% 18%	45%
尊重同事 respect their colleagues	Total Non-VU VU	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.	0% 87%		
应用所学知识 apply their knowledge	Total Non-VU VU	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.	74% 28% 12%	45% 59%	
运用中、英文交流 communicate in Chinese and English	Total Non-VU VU	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.	0% 83% 45% 29%	38% 53%	
洞察和预见问题 notice problems and possibilities as they arise	Total Non-VU VU	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.	75% 27% 18%		
联系不同学科体系 make links between different subjects	Total Non-VU VU	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.	85% 52% 71%	17% 0%	
区分工作重点 identify the most important tasks	Total Non-VU VU	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.	77% 0%		
具有独立创新的见解 come up with new ideas	Total Non-VU VU	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.	74% 30% 59%	40% 24%	
服从领导 follow directions without question	Total Non-VU VU	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.	79% 10% 0%	53% 6% 59%	3% 35%
独立工作 work without supervision	Total Non-VU VU	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.	77% 25% 14%		
激励他人 motivate others	Total Non-VU VU	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.	70% 30% 53%	37% 24%	
按期完成工作任务 complete tasks within a deadline	Total Non-VU VU	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.	87% 40% 59%		
承受压力 perform well under pressure	Total Non-VU VU	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.	0% 50% 71%	83% 33% 12%	
收集相关工作信息 gather information	Total Non-VU	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.	79% 10%		

	VU	0%				Melbourne
		N.I.	S.I.	Q.I.	H.I.	
	Total	0%		75%		Total
	Non-VU		33%	27%	40%	Liaoning
	VU		12%	59%	29%	Melbourne
建立人际关系 build relationships						
		N.I.	S.I.	Q.I.	H.I.	
	Total		76%			Total
	Non-VU	10%	31%			Liaoning
	VU	0%	53%			Melbourne
了解所从事工作的社 会价值 see the value of their job outside the workplace						
		N.I.	S.I.	Q.I.	H.I.	
	Total		78%			Total
	Non-VU					Liaoning
	VU					Melbourne

### 7.7.2 Lecturers

The complete dataset for the cross-tabulation and t-test results is in Table 37. Chinese teaching staff who are not partners are in the non-shaded cells; Chinese teaching staff who teach into VU programs are in the shaded cells.

The three p values in bold with an asterisk are significant at 0.05, meaning that the spread of the results between the two groups of lecturers is significantly different for these three workplace skills: *should be able to solve problems* (U=135.5, p=0.003); *should be able to make decisions* (U=160.5, p=0.026) and *should be able to follow directions without question* (U=82.0, p=0.000). For the first two workplace skills more non-partner lecturers perceived the skills as important; for *follow directions* more partner lecturers perceived the skill as important.

The comments in the middle column of Table 36 are based on cross tabulating the percentages for each rating for each listed skill by Chinese lecturers of VU programs in China with Chinese lecturers of non-VU programs in China.

**Table 30 Cross tabulation and Mann Whitney results for importance of workplace skills by lecturers**

7.求职毕业生在工作中应能够: Graduating students preparing for employment in the workplace should be able to:	不重要 Not important	较重要 Slightly important	重要 Quite important	很重要 Highly important	Asymp. Sig. (2- tailed)
团队合作work in teams	0.0%	6.7%	40.0%	53.3%	.372
	0.0%	0.0%	35.3%	64.7%	
All		4.3%	38.3%	57.4%	
思维敏捷think quickly	0.0%	20.7%	51.7%	27.6%	.928
	0.0%	11.8%	70.6%	17.6%	
All		17.4%	58.7%	23.9%	
表达个人观点argue for what they think is right	0.0%	36.7%	40.0%	23.3%	.184
	5.9%	47.1%	35.3%	11.8%	
All	2.1%	40.4%	38.3%	19.1%	
善于解决问题solve problems	0.0%	3.3%	43.3%	53.3%	<b>.003*</b>
	0.0%	17.6%	70.6%	11.8%	
All		8.5%	53.2%	38.3%	

考虑他人意见consider other people's points of view	0.0%	20.0%	63.3%	16.7%	.649
	0.0%	35.3%	41.2%	23.5%	
All		25.5%	55.3%	19.1%	
使用电脑处理一般性工作 use the computer for general office tasks	13.3%	36.7%	30.0%	20.0%	.191
	5.9%	23.5%	41.2%	29.4%	
All	10.6%	31.9%	34.0%	23.4%	
敢于做决定make decisions	10.0%	26.7%	43.3%	20.0%	.026*
	11.8%	58.8%	29.4%	0.0%	
All	10.6%	38.3%	38.3%	12.8%	
书写报告write reports	10.3%	24.1%	44.8%	20.7%	.105
	0.0%	70.6%	17.6%	11.8%	
All	6.5%	41.3%	34.8%	17.4%	
尊重同事respect their colleagues	0.0%	13.8%	62.1%	24.1%	.947
	0.0%	11.8%	64.7%	23.5%	
All		13.0%	63.0%	23.9%	
应用所学知识apply their knowledge	3.4%	27.6%	44.8%	24.1%	.605
	5.9%	11.8%	58.8%	23.5%	
All	4.3%	21.7%	50.0%	23.9%	
运用中、英文交流communicate in Chinese and English	0.0%	44.8%	37.9%	17.2%	.430
	0.0%	29.4%	52.9%	17.6%	
All		39.1%	43.5%	17.4%	
洞察和预见问题notice problems and possibilities as they arise	3.3%	36.7%	33.3%	26.7%	.768
	0.0%	41.2%	41.2%	17.6%	
All	2.1%	38.3%	36.2%	23.4%	
联系不同学科体系make links between different subjects	3.4%	51.7%	27.6%	17.2%	.099
	5.9%	70.6%	23.5%	0.0%	
All	4.3%	58.7%	26.1%	10.9%	
区分工作重点identify the most important tasks	3.3%	20.0%	43.3%	33.3%	.676
	0.0%	23.5%	52.9%	23.5%	
All	2.1%	21.3%	46.8%	29.8%	
具有独立创新的见解come up with new ideas	3.3%	26.7%	30.0%	40.0%	.832
	0.0%	17.6%	58.8%	23.5%	
All	2.1%	23.4%	40.4%	34.0%	
服从领导follow directions without question	10.0%	53.3%	33.3%	3.3%	.000*
	0.0%	5.9%	58.8%	35.3%	
All	6.4%	36.2%	42.6%	14.9%	
独立工作work without supervision	6.7%	16.7%	46.7%	30.0%	.765
	5.9%	17.6%	52.9%	23.5%	
All	6.4%	17.0%	48.9%	27.7%	
激励他人motivate others	13.3%	30.0%	36.7%	20.0%	.279
	11.8%	52.9%	23.5%	11.8%	
All	12.8%	38.3%	31.9%	17.0%	
按期完成工作任务complete tasks within a deadline	3.3%	13.3%	43.3%	40.0%	.166
	0.0%	5.9%	35.3%	58.8%	
All	2.1%	10.6%	40.4%	46.8%	
承受压力perform well under pressure	0.0%	16.7%	50.0%	33.3%	.236

	0.0%	17.6%	70.6%	11.8%	
All		17.0%	57.4%	25.5%	
收集相关工作信息gather information	10.0%	33.3%	40.0%	16.7%	.850
	0.0%	41.2%	47.1%	11.8%	
All	6.4%	36.2%	42.6%	14.9%	
建立人际关系build relationships	0.0%	33.3%	26.7%	40.0%	.723
	0.0%	11.8%	58.8%	29.4%	
All		25.5%	38.3%	36.2%	
了解所从事工作的社会价值 see the value of their job outside the workplace	10.3%	31.0%	37.9%	20.7%	.594
	0.0%	52.9%	35.3%	11.8%	
All	6.5%	39.1%	37.0%	17.4%	

## 7.8 Workplace skills as a curriculum focus

Question 8 asked respondents about the teaching and learning program, specifically the importance of workplace skills in the context of the curriculum. The same twenty-three skills as presented in the previous section were used and respondents had to rate each one as “Not Important”, “Slightly Important”, “Quite Important” or “Highly Important”.

### 7.8.1 Graduating students

Only *use of computers for general office tasks* ( $U=1816.5$ ,  $p=0.022$ ) was significant at a 5 per cent level of significance, with Liaoning students perceiving it as more important. This is consistent with the perceived rating of importance in Table 38.

**Table 31 Cross tabulation and Mann Whitney results for workplace skills in the context of the curriculum for students**

8. 您认为课程设置对于培养毕业生以下技能的重要性如何? How important is it that the curriculum allows graduating students develop the skills to:	不重要 Not Important	较重要 Slightly Important	重要 Quite Important	很重要 Highly Important	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
	Cross tabulation				
团队合作work in teams	6.1%	18.4%	42.9%	32.7%	.537
	0.0%	13.7%	56.8%	29.5%	
All	2.1%	15.3%	52.1%	30.6%	
思维敏捷think quickly	4.1%	22.4%	49.0%	24.5%	.516
	0.0%	29.0%	53.8%	17.2%	
All	1.4%	26.8%	52.1%	19.7%	
表达个人观点argue for what they think is right	2.0%	20.4%	49.0%	28.6%	.700
	0.0%	21.3%	56.4%	22.3%	
All	0.7%	21.0%	53.8%	24.5%	
善于解决问题solve problems	2.0%	16.3%	51.0%	30.6%	.716
	0.0%	12.6%	57.9%	29.5%	
All	0.7%	13.9%	55.6%	29.9%	
考虑他人意见consider other people's points of view	2.0%	26.5%	44.9%	26.5%	.863
	2.1%	22.3%	55.3%	20.2%	

	All	2.1%	23.8%	51.7%	22.4%	
使用电脑处理一般性工作		0.0%	24.5%	49.0%	26.5%	
use the computer for general office tasks		2.1%	33.0%	55.3%	9.6%	.022*
	All	1.4%	30.1%	53.1%	15.4%	
敢于做决定make decisions		6.1%	18.4%	46.9%	28.6%	
		0.0%	22.3%	60.6%	17.0%	.526
	All	2.1%	21.0%	55.9%	21.0%	
书写报告write reports		6.1%	18.4%	40.8%	34.7%	
		2.1%	33.0%	45.7%	19.1%	.075
	All	3.5%	28.0%	44.1%	24.5%	
尊重同事respect their colleagues		8.2%	24.5%	38.8%	28.6%	
		0.0%	25.8%	52.7%	21.5%	.813
	All	2.8%	25.4%	47.9%	23.9%	
应用所学知识apply their knowledge		6.1%	14.3%	57.1%	22.4%	
		0.0%	14.9%	50.0%	35.1%	.099
	All	2.1%	14.7%	52.4%	30.8%	
运用中、英文交流communicate in Chinese and English		0.0%	16.3%	42.9%	40.8%	
		1.1%	14.9%	52.1%	31.9%	.428
	All	0.7%	15.4%	49.0%	35.0%	
洞察和预见问题notice problems and possibilities as they arise		6.1%	16.3%	49.0%	28.6%	
		0.0%	9.6%	69.1%	21.3%	.639
	All	2.1%	11.9%	62.2%	23.8%	
联系不同学科体系make links between different subjects		6.1%	42.9%	32.7%	18.4%	
		2.1%	42.6%	43.6%	11.7%	.849
	All	3.5%	42.7%	39.9%	14.0%	
区分工作重点identify the most important tasks		8.2%	26.5%	51.0%	14.3%	
		1.1%	28.7%	56.4%	13.8%	.517
	All	3.5%	28.0%	54.5%	14.0%	
具有独立创新的见解come up with new ideas		2.0%	26.5%	51.0%	20.4%	
		1.1%	17.4%	53.3%	28.3%	.142
	All	1.4%	20.6%	52.5%	25.5%	
服从领导follow directions without question		6.1%	40.8%	32.7%	20.4%	
		1.1%	43.0%	45.2%	10.8%	.944
	All	2.8%	42.3%	40.8%	14.1%	
独立工作work without supervision		2.0%	20.4%	34.7%	42.9%	
		1.1%	20.4%	57.0%	21.5%	.093
	All	1.4%	20.4%	49.3%	28.9%	
激励他人motivate others		6.1%	34.7%	42.9%	16.3%	
		1.1%	30.9%	51.1%	17.0%	.319
	All	2.8%	32.2%	48.3%	16.8%	
按期完成工作任务complete tasks within a deadline		2.0%	10.2%	57.1%	30.6%	
		0.0%	11.8%	51.6%	36.6%	.531
	All	0.7%	11.3%	53.5%	34.5%	
承受压力perform well under pressure		4.1%	18.4%	55.1%	22.4%	
		0.0%	20.2%	44.7%	35.1%	.189
	All	1.4%	19.6%	48.3%	30.8%	
收集相关工作信息gather information		2.0%	18.4%	53.1%	26.5%	
		1.1%	21.3%	55.3%	22.3%	.624

	All	1.4%	20.3%	54.5%	23.8%	
建立人际关系build relationships		6.1%	20.4%	34.7%	38.8%	.442
		0.0%	16.1%	45.2%	38.7%	
	All	2.1%	17.6%	41.5%	38.7%	
了解所从事工作的社会价值 see the value of their job outside the workplace		8.2%	26.5%	49.0%	16.3%	.354
		3.3%	23.3%	55.6%	17.8%	
	All	5.0%	24.5%	53.2%	17.3%	

\* denotes significance ( $p < 0.05$ )

Descriptive comments based on the results of cross tabulating t percentages for each rating for each listed skill by Melbourne students with the Liaoning students are given in Table 75 (Appendix L). The middle column of Table 75 summarises the importance ratings of workplace skills in the curriculum.

### 7.8.2 Lecturers

Table 39 below focuses on the lecturers' responses to the importance of skill development in the curriculum. Of note are the three skills for which the two teaching groups responded significantly differently ( $p < 0.05$ ) using the Mann-Whitney test (denoted by \* and **bolded**). The first was the importance of the curriculum allowing skill development for *communication in English and Chinese*, with the partner lecturers perceiving it as more important ( $U=150.5$ ,  $p=0.013$ ). This contrasted with responses in regard to workplace skills explored in the previous section: at that level there was no difference between the lecturer groups in their importance rating for this language development skill. This highlights that while both languages are important in the workplace, the VU curriculum requires assessment to be in English. Therefore partner lecturers regard English language as important and the curriculum should focus on addressing a workplace requirement such as developing English language skills. In the short term lecturers want students to be academically successful, but in the longer term they are interested in equipping students with perceived employability skills.

The second skill for which responses between the groups were significantly different was in relation to the curriculum allowing graduating students to develop skills *to follow directions without question* ( $U=140.0$ ,  $p=0.006$ ). The pattern of responses was very similar to how both groups of lecturers responded *to follow directions without question* in relation to the workplace, which was also statistically significant, and for both items partner lecturers perceived them as more important. This could be an instance of diligently developing the independent learning style promoted in the Australian curriculum or of a skill that Chinese lecturers believe is valuable to Chinese employers.

The third skill for which responses differed significantly related to being able *to build relationships* ( $U=163.0$ ,  $p=0.030$ ). The non-partner lecturers' responses clustered in the middle, but partner

lecturers gave it much more importance. As a homogeneously educated group of lecturers looking at the same workplace, it is hard to understand why their responses were not more similar. The importance that partner lecturers placed on relationship developing skills is perhaps explained by the fact that they teach different curricula and one group is trying to work successfully with foreign lecturers with a foreign curriculum.

**Table 32 Cross tabulation and Mann Whitney results for workplace skills in the context of the curriculum for lecturers**

8.您认为课程设置对于培养毕业生以下技能的重要性如何? How important is it that the curriculum allows graduating students develop the skills to:	不重要 Not important	较重要 Slightly important	重要 Quite important	很重要 Highly important	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
	Cross-tabulation				
团队合作work in teams	3.3%	20.0%	40.0%	36.7%	.504
	6.3%	6.3%	43.8%	43.8%	
All	4.3%	15.2%	41.3%	39.1%	
思维敏捷think quickly	3.3%	30.0%	43.3%	23.3%	.599
	0.0%	18.8%	62.5%	18.8%	
All	2.2%	26.1%	50.0%	21.7%	
表达个人观点argue for what they think is right	3.3%	20.0%	40.0%	36.7%	.556
	5.9%	23.5%	41.2%	29.4%	
All	4.3%	21.3%	40.4%	34.0%	
善于解决问题solve problems	0.0%	13.3%	33.3%	53.3%	.542
	0.0%	11.8%	47.1%	41.2%	
All		12.8%	38.3%	48.9%	
考虑他人意见consider other people's points of view	6.7%	43.3%	40.0%	10.0%	.822
	11.8%	35.3%	35.3%	17.6%	
All	8.5%	40.4%	38.3%	12.8%	
使用电脑处理一般性工作 use the computer for general office tasks	10.3%	51.7%	24.1%	13.8%	.191
	0.0%	47.1%	29.4%	23.5%	
All	6.5%	50.0%	26.1%	17.4%	
敢于做决定make decisions	6.7%	36.7%	46.7%	10.0%	.085
	17.6%	47.1%	35.3%		
All	10.6%	40.4%	42.6%	6.4%	
书写报告write reports	0.0%	26.7%	46.7%	26.7%	.790
	0.0%	23.5%	58.8%	17.6%	
All		25.5%	51.1%	23.4%	
尊重同事respect their colleagues	10.0%	43.3%	33.3%	13.3%	.088
	0.0%	29.4%	47.1%	23.5%	
All	6.4%	38.3%	38.3%	17.0%	
应用所学知识apply their knowledge	3.3%	10.0%	56.7%	30.0%	.893
	0.0%	17.6%	47.1%	35.3%	
All	2.1%	12.8%	53.2%	31.9%	
运用中、英文交流communicate in Chinese and English	3.3%	26.7%	53.3%	16.7%	.013*
	0.0%	11.8%	35.3%	52.9%	
All	2.1%	21.3%	46.8%	29.8%	

洞察和预见问题notice problems and possibilities as they arise	6.7%	30.0%	40.0%	23.3%	.598
	0.0%	52.9%	23.5%	23.5%	
All	4.3%	38.3%	34.0%	23.4%	
联系不同学科体系make links between different subjects	6.9%	27.6%	41.4%	24.1%	.393
	0.0%	35.3%	64.7%	0.0%	
All	4.3%	30.4%	50.0%	15.2%	
区分工作重点identify the most important tasks	6.9%	31.0%	51.7%	10.3%	.725
		35.3%	52.9%	11.8%	
All	4.3%	32.6%	52.2%	10.9%	
具有独立创新的见解come up with new ideas	6.7%	13.3%	50.0%	30.0%	.703
	5.9%	23.5%	41.2%	29.4%	
All	6.4%	17.0%	46.8%	29.8%	
服从领导follow directions without question	20.0%	40.0%	33.3%	6.7%	.006*
	0.0%	17.6%	70.6%	11.8%	
All	12.8%	31.9%	46.8%	8.5%	
独立工作work without supervision	3.3%	20.0%	50.0%	26.7%	.867
	0.0%	23.5%	47.1%	29.4%	
All	2.1%	21.3%	48.9%	27.7%	
激励他人motivate others	20.0%	53.3%	16.7%	10.0%	.422
	5.9%	64.7%	17.6%	11.8%	
All	14.9%	57.4%	17.0%	10.6%	
按期完成工作任务complete tasks within a deadline	0.0%	10.0%	63.3%	26.7%	.451
	0.0%	11.8%	47.1%	41.2%	
All		10.6%	57.4%	31.9%	
承受压力perform well under pressure	0.0%	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	.222
	0.0%	17.6%	58.8%	23.5%	
All		31.9%	46.8%	21.3%	
收集相关工作信息gather information	10.0%	33.3%	40.0%	16.7%	.935
	5.9%	47.1%	23.5%	23.5%	
All	8.5%	38.3%	34.0%	19.1%	
建立人际关系build relationships	6.7%	43.3%	36.7%	13.3%	.030*
	11.8%		58.8%	29.4%	
All	8.5%	27.7%	44.7%	19.1%	
了解所从事工作的社会价值	13.3%	33.3%	40.0%	13.3%	.673
see the value of their job outside the workplace	0.0%	52.9%	23.5%	23.5%	
All	8.5%	40.4%	34.0%	17.0%	

Taking the graduate students as one group and the lecturers as one group, their responses were compared for this question (Table 40). For nine of the 23 skills they differed significantly in their importance ratings and in eight/nine cases the graduating students rated the skills more importantly than the lecturers. All were significant at the 0.05 level.

1. *Consider other people's points of view:*  $U=2480.0$ ,  $p=0.004$
2. *Use the computer for general office tasks:*  $U=2595.5$ ,  $p=0.020$
3. *Make decisions:*  $U=2193.5$ ,  $p=0.000$
4. *Respect their colleagues:*  $U=2734.0$ ,  $p=0.047$



5. *Notice problems and possibilities as they arise*: U=2628.0, p=0.013
6. *Motivate others*: U=2074.0, p=0.000
7. *Gather information*: U=2555.0, p=0.008
8. *Build relationships*: U=2445.5, p=0.003

The lecturers rated the following skill as more important than the graduating students:

1. *Solve problems*: U=2786.5, p=0.045

**Table 33 Comparison of lecturer and student responses to workplace skills as curriculum focus**

8. 您认为课程设置对于培养毕业生以下技能的重要性如何? How important is it that the curriculum allows graduating students develop the skills to:	Student v lecturer
团队合作work in teams	.562
思维敏捷think quickly	.897
表达个人观点argue for what they think is right	.667
善于解决问题solve problems	<b>.045*</b>
考虑他人意见consider other people's points of view	<b>.004*</b>
使用电脑处理一般性工作 use the computer for general office tasks	<b>.020*</b>
敢于做决定make decisions	<b>.000*</b>
书写报告write reports	.609
尊重同事respect their colleagues	<b>.047*</b>
应用所学知识apply their knowledge	.802
运用中、英文交流communicate in Chinese and English	.299
洞察和预见问题notice problems and possibilities as they arise	<b>.013*</b>
联系不同学科体系make links between different subjects	.288
区分工作重点identify the most important tasks	.434
具有独立创新的见解come up with new ideas	.894
服从领导follow directions without question	.424
独立工作work without supervision	.806
激励他人motivate others	<b>.000*</b>
按期完成工作任务complete tasks within a deadline	.878
承受压力perform well under pressure	.104
收集相关工作信息gather information	<b>.008*</b>
建立人际关系build relationships	<b>.003*</b>
了解所从事工作的社会价值see the value of their job outside the workplace	.072

\* p<0.05

## 7.9 Workplace skills as a teaching focus

Question 9 asked respondents about the teaching program and implicitly about the lecturers' actions. The category labels for the teaching context used a frequency scale in order to determine if lecturers used their own judgement or abilities to encourage graduating students to acquire skills that lecturers thought important in the workplace. The same twenty-three skills as presented in the previous two sections were used and respondents had to rate each one either "Not at all", "Sometimes", "Often" or "Always", according to the frequency with which they perceived lecturers encouraged graduating students to acquire the skills.

### 7.9.1 Graduating students

Only *communicate in Chinese and English* ( $U=1795$ ,  $p=0.020$ ) and *follow directions without question* ( $U=1657$ ,  $p=0.012$ ) were significant at a 5% level of significance, with Liaoning students perceiving both as occurring more frequently. See Table 41.

**Table 34 Cross tabulation and Mann Whitney results for students' perception of teaching frequency**

9.作为学生，您认为教师是否经常鼓励毕业生掌握以下技能？ How frequently do the lecturers encourage graduating students to acquire the following skills:	从不 Not at all	偶尔/有时 Sometimes	经常 Often	总是 Always	Asymp. Sig. (2- tailed)
	Cross tabulation				
团队合作work in teams	2.0%	22.4%	55.1%	20.4%	.623
	0.0%	20.2%	58.5%	21.3%	
All	0.7%	21.0%	57.3%	21.0%	
思维敏捷think quickly	4.1%	30.6%	51.0%	14.3%	.436
	4.3%	37.2%	46.8%	11.7%	
All	4.2%	35.0%	48.3%	12.6%	
表达个人观点argue for what they think is right	4.1%	22.4%	46.9%	26.5%	.522
	1.1%	18.1%	54.3%	26.6%	
All	2.1%	19.6%	51.7%	26.6%	
善于解决问题solve problems	4.1%	18.4%	44.9%	32.7%	.521
	0.0%	23.4%	52.1%	24.5%	
All	1.4%	21.7%	49.7%	27.3%	
考虑他人意见consider other people's points of view	4.1%	28.6%	42.9%	24.5%	.552
	2.2%	36.6%	39.8%	21.5%	
All	2.8%	33.8%	40.8%	22.5%	
使用电脑处理一般性工作 use the computer for general office tasks	4.1%	26.5%	40.8%	28.6%	.116
	3.2%	38.3%	41.5%	17.0%	
All	3.5%	34.3%	41.3%	21.0%	
敢于做决定make decisions	4.1%	32.7%	40.8%	22.4%	.842
	3.2%	27.7%	51.1%	18.1%	
All	3.5%	29.4%	47.6%	19.6%	
书写报告write reports		28.6%	38.8%	32.7%	.486

		20.2%	45.7%	34.0%	
All		23.1%	43.4%	33.6%	
尊重同事respect their colleagues		8.2%	30.6%	40.*%	.343
		2.1%	29.8%	44.7%	
All		4.2%	30.1%	43.4%	22.4%
应用所学知识apply their knowledge		2.0%	24.5%	51.0%	.163
		2.1%	19.1%	43.6%	
All		2.1%	21.0%	46.2%	30.8%
运用中、英文交流communicate in Chinese and English		.0%	12.2%	55.1%	.020*
		7.4%	25.5%	42.6%	
All		4.9%	21.0%	46.9%	27.3%
洞察和预见问题notice problems and possibilities as they arise		10.2%	26.5%	46.9%	.197
		2.2%	29.0%	44.1%	
All		4.9%	28.2%	45.1%	21.8%
联系不同学科体系make links between different subjects		8.2%	36.7%	38.8%	.578
		6.5%	32.3%	45.2%	
All		7.0%	33.8%	43.0%	16.2%
区分工作重点identify the most important tasks		6.1%	34.7%	49.0%	.094
		.0%	30.1%	52.7%	
All		2.1%	31.7%	51.4%	14.8%
具有独立创新的见解come up with new ideas		10.2%	24.5%	36.7%	.577
		1.1%	22.8%	54.3%	
All		4.3%	23.4%	48.2%	24.1%
服从领导follow directions without question		8.2%	30.6%	44.9%	.012*
		10.1%	51.7%	31.5%	
All		9.4%	44.2%	36.2%	10.1%
独立工作work without supervision		4.1%	24.5%	53.1%	.364
		0.0%	19.1%	62.9%	
All		1.4%	21.0%	59.4%	18.1%
激励他人motivate others		4.1%	44.9%	38.8%	.717
		6.7%	39.3%	37.1%	
All		5.8%	41.3%	37.7%	15.2%
按期完成工作任务complete tasks within a deadline		2.0%	16.3%	40.8%	.725
		0.0%	16.3%	40.8%	
All		0.7%	16.3%	40.7%	42.2%
承受压力perform well under pressure		10.4%	18.8%	50.0%	.990
		5.7%	27.3%	44.3%	
All		7.4%	24.3%	46.3%	22.1%
收集相关工作信息gather information		2.0%	28.6%	42.9%	.794
		1.1%	22.5%	53.9%	
All		1.4%	24.6%	50.0%	23.9%
建立人际关系build relationships		6.1%	24.5%	40.8%	.572
		3.4%	29.2%	46.2%	
All		4.3%	27.5%	44.2%	23.9%
了解所从事工作的社会价值 see the value of their job outside the workplace		6.1%	38.8%	38.8%	.181
		5.7%	27.3%	44.3%	
All		5.8%	31.4%	42.3%	20.4%

\* denotes significance ( $p < 0.05$ ) and bolded.

Table 75 (Appendix L) summarises the trends within the figures as the same statements are viewed from different perspectives and different responsibilities, namely the workplace or employment, curriculum and teaching contexts. (Not At All = N; Sometimes = S; Often = O; Always = A.)

## 7.9.2 Lecturers

Examining the findings statistically using the Mann-Whitney test resulted in the two lecturer groups providing significantly different responses for the same three skills as they did when responding to the importance of these skills in the curriculum. These were: *communicating in Chinese and English* ( $U=121.5$ ,  $p=0.003$ ), *following directions without question* ( $U=90.0$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) and *building relationships* ( $U=107.0$ ,  $p=0.001$ ) (see Table 42). For each, VU partner lecturers rated the skills as being encouraged more often than non-VU lecturers. Moreover, similar response patterns were exhibited (see Table 76, Appendix M which summarises the results of the teaching context in the last column, compared to the previously described curriculum and employment contexts). In other words, where the two groups of lecturers differed about the importance ratings of skill development within the curriculum, they also differed about the frequency of encouraging that same skill development. Specifically, there was a positive correlation between ratings so that a skill rated “Highly Important” in the curriculum was “Always” encouraged within teaching, at least from the lecturers’ perspectives.

**Table 35 Cross tabulation and Mann Whitney results for lecturers’ perception of teaching frequency**

9. 作为学生，您认为教师是否经常鼓励毕业生掌握以下技能？ How frequently do the lecturers encourage graduating students to acquire the following skills:	从不 Not at all	偶尔/有时 Sometimes	经常 Often	总是 Always	Asymp. Sig. (2- tailed)
	Cross-tabulation				
团队合作work in teams	0.0%	23.3%	53.3%	23.3%	.085
	0.0%		64.7%	35.3%	
All		14.9%	57.4%	27.7%	
思维敏捷think quickly	0.0%	27.6%	51.7%	20.7%	.721
	0.0%	17.6%	64.7%	17.6%	
All		23.9%	56.5%	19.6%	
表达个人观点argue for what they think is right	0.0%	13.3%	56.7%	30.0%	.467
	0.0%	29.4%	41.2%	29.4%	
All		19.1%	51.1%	29.8%	
善于解决问题solve problems	3.3%	16.7%	40.0%	40.0%	.553
	0.0%	23.5%	47.1%	29.4%	
All	2.1%	19.1%	42.6%	36.2%	
考虑他人意见consider other people's points of view	0.0%	30.0%	56.7%	13.3%	.682
	0.0%	35.3%	35.3%	29.4%	
All		31.0%	48.9%	19.1%	

使用电脑处理一般性工作	3.3%	53.3%	30.0%	13.3%	.141
use the computer for general office tasks	0.0%	29.4%	58.8%	11.8%	
All	2.1%	44.7%	40.4%	12.8%	
敢于做决定make decisions	0.0%	40.0%	53.3%	6.7%	.082
	5.9%	64.7%	17.6%	11.8%	
All	2.1%	48.9%	40.4%	8.5%	
书写报告write reports	3.3%	13.3%	60.0%	23.3%	.391
	0.0%	29.4%	52.9%	17.6%	
All	2.1%	19.1%	57.4%	21.3%	
尊重同事respect their colleagues	0.0%	30.0%	53.3%	16.7%	.093
	0.0%	17.6%	41.2%	41.2%	
All		25.5%	48.9%	25.5%	
应用所学知识apply their knowledge	0.0%	6.7%	50.0%	43.3%	.512
	0.0%	11.8%	52.9%	35.3%	
All		8.5%	51.1%	40.4%	
运用中、英文交流communicate in Chinese and English	6.9%	34.5%	41.4%	17.2%	.003*
	0.0%	5.9%	41.2%	52.9%	
All	4.3%	23.9%	41.3%	30.4%	
洞察和预见问题notice problems and possibilities as they arise	6.7%	36.7%	40.0%	16.7%	.703
	0.0%	35.3%	52.9%	11.8%	
All	4.3%	36.2%	44.7%	14.9%	
联系不同学科体系make links between different subjects	0.0%	40.0%	36.7%	23.3%	.674
	0.0%	35.3%	58.8%	5.9%	
All		38.3%	44.7%	17.0%	
区分工作重点identify the most important tasks	6.7%	26.7%	53.3%	13.3%	.794
	0.0%	25.0%	68.8%	6.3%	
All	4.3%	26.1%	58.7%	10.9%	
具有独立创新的见解come up with new ideas	0.0%	20.0%	63.3%	16.7%	.627
	0.0%	17.6%	58.8%	23.5%	
All		19.1%	61.7%	19.1%	
服从领导follow directions without question	30.0%	43.3%	26.7%		.000*
	0.0%	23.5%	47.1%	29.4%	
All	19.1%	36.2%	34.0%	10.6%	
独立工作work without supervision	0.0%	13.3%	40.0%	46.7%	.232
	0.0%	11.8%	64.7%	23.5%	
All		12.8%	48.9%	38.3%	
激励他人motivate others	20.0%	30.0%	36.7%	13.3%	.981
	0.0%	58.8%	35.3%	5.9%	
All	12.8%	40.4%	36.2%	10.6%	
按期完成工作任务complete tasks within a deadline	3.3%	6.7%	43.3%	46.7%	.515
	0.0%	11.8%	29.4%	58.8%	
All	2.1%	8.5%	38.3%	51.1%	
承受压力perform well under pressure	0.0%	43.3%	43.3%	13.3%	.109
	0.0%	23.5%	47.1%	29.4%	
All		36.2%	44.7%	19.1%	
收集相关工作信息gather information	6.7%	36.7%	46.7%	10.0%	.581
	0.0%	41.2%	41.2%	17.6%	
All	4.3%	38.3%	44.7%	12.8%	

建立人际关系build relationships	13.3%	46.7%	33.3%	6.7%	<b>.001*</b>
	0.0%	11.8%	52.9%	35.3%	
All	8.5%	34.0%	40.4%	17.0%	
了解所从事工作的社会价值 see the value of their job outside the workplace	6.7%	40.0%	36.7%	16.7%	.353
	0.0%	23.5%	70.6%	5.9%	
All	4.3%	34.0%	48.9%	12.8%	

Both graduating students and lecturers were asked to consider the teaching and learning program from the perspective of frequency of teaching specific skills. The Mann Whitney test yielded five items where lecturers and students differed in their perception of the frequency of the teaching (Table 43). Of these five items, *make decisions* and *gather information* were the skills for which lecturers and students differed in their response to the importance of the curriculum in developing the skill.

The graduating students rated two higher than the lecturers on the “how frequently” scale, namely:

1. *Make decisions* (U=2655.5, p=0.020)
2. *Gather information* (U=2553.5, p=0.019).

The lecturers rated these three as occurring more frequently than the graduating students:

1. *Think quickly* (U=2678.0, p=0.038)
2. *Apply knowledge* (U=2766.0, p=0.049)
3. *Work unsupervised* (U=2472.0, p=0.006).

**Table 36 Comparison of lecturer and student responses for the frequency that workplace skills are a curriculum focus**

9. 作为教师，您是否经常鼓励毕业生掌握以下技能？ How frequently do you as the teacher encourage graduating students to acquire the following skills:	Student v lecturer
团队合作work in teams	.217
思维敏捷think quickly	<b>.038*</b>
表达个人观点argue for what they think is right	.591
善于解决问题solve problems	.376
考虑他人意见consider other people's points of view	.792
使用电脑处理一般性工作 use the computer for general office tasks	.209
敢于做决定make decisions	<b>.020*</b>
书写报告write reports	.332
尊重同事respect their colleagues	.275
应用所学知识apply their knowledge	<b>.049*</b>
运用中、英文交流communicate in Chinese and English	.925

洞察和预见问题notice problems and possibilities as they arise	.282
联系不同学科体系make links between different subjects	.559
区分工作重点identify the most important tasks	.951
具有独立创新的见解come up with new ideas	.680
服从领导follow directions without question	.488
独立工作work without supervision	<b>.006*</b>
激励他人motivate others	.250
按期完成工作任务complete tasks within a deadline	.233
承受压力perform well under pressure	.753
收集相关工作信息gather information	<b>.019*</b>
建立人际关系build relationships	.137
了解所从事工作的社会价值 see the value of their job outside the workplace	.584

\* p<0.05

## 7.10 Workplace skills summary

Table 44 presents an overview of the importance and frequency responses in order to determine the existence of any trends for the three questions which investigated workplace skills. The lecturers and students consistently perceive the survey items as more important in employment than in the curriculum except for *apply their knowledge* which relatively speaking was a very frequent focus of the teaching. Students and lecturers differ notably for *make decisions*.

**Table 37 Relating importance and frequency responses**

Workplace skill	Importance in employment (sum of “Quite” and “Highly Important” of all responses)	Importance in curriculum (sum of “Quite” and “Highly Important” of all responses)	Focus of teaching (sum of “Often” and “Always” of all responses)
	Students (Lecturers in brackets)	Students (Lecturers in brackets)	Students (Lecturers in brackets)
Work in teams	88 (96%)	83 (80%)	78 (85%)
Solve problems	90 (92%)	86 (87%)	77 (79%)
consider other people's points of view	83 (74%)	74 (51%)	63 (68%)
Make decisions	81 (51%)	77 (49%)	67 (49%)
Respect their colleagues	85 (87%)	72 (55%)	66 (74%)
Apply their knowledge	80 (74%)	83 (85%)	77 (92%)
Communicate in Chinese and English	91 (61%)	84 (77%)	74 (72%)
Come up with new ideas	86 (74%)	82 (77%)	72 (81%)
Work without supervision	82 (77%)	78 (77%)	78 (87%)
Complete tasks within a deadline	88 (87%)	88 (89%)	83 (89%)

Perform well under pressure	86 (83%)	79 (68%)	68 (64%)
Build relationships	90 (75%)	80 (64%)	68 (57%)

### 7.10.1 Interviews: what do the lecturers know about the employment process

Nineteen partner and non-partner Chinese lecturers from two tertiary institutions - a subset of the lecturers already surveyed - were interviewed. The semi-structured questions led to some discussion about the employment process. The importance of their responses lies in whether or not such information is presented to the students, which was one purpose of the curriculum focus questions.

When asked how students find out about employment and allowing respondents to nominate more than one method, family connections were deemed to be the most common method. This Chinese version of a 'word of mouth' notification favours the family and hints at the importance of family relationships above other relationships. Internet advertising was placed second in importance which may reflect the lecturers' perceptions of how students prefer to search; that is electronically rather than reading a hardcopy newspaper. As a third strategy, students ask lecturers. This can be interpreted as students thinking lecturers are a relatively less-informed source or alternatively reflects the high respect that students have for lecturers.

Sixty-nine percent of the respondents thought that the personal characteristics of the graduate were more important to an employer than the technical skills of the qualification. This is at odds with what lecturers were saying about the curriculum in the survey, but could be due to the curriculum and particularly assessment focus.

A similar response could be noted to the question *How important is the graduate's performance in an interview in getting a job?* Eighty four per cent of the lecturers chose "Very Important". If a graduate's performance is important for getting a job, then the underlying skills need to be determined. A range of oral communication and interpersonal skills determine performance in a job interview, yet oral communication skills while occasionally assessed, are not taught very systematically in the curriculum. The graduates who 'innately' possess these skills most likely will be the successful applicants, unless they are developed in some other context.

Fifty-eight percent of respondents believe that businesses expect graduates to be immediately useful. Thirty-two percent believe that businesses expect graduates to be useful after one month and ten per cent believe that businesses will wait six months. These responses could reflect the type of business that lecturers believe their graduates enter; that is not major multinational businesses that have formal and lengthy induction programs. Family businesses and State Owned Enterprises usually need to quickly see some value for their investment in the new hire. It is also likely that such businesses do



not hire with a definite long term strategy in mind. Rather, there are immediate needs to be met and the sooner the new employee can fulfil these, the better.

Some lecturers (44%) considered that businesses with a good reputation are most likely to attract graduates. Another way (33%) for business to attract the best graduates was through a remuneration package that combined health, education and salary.

The lecturers clearly believed that students regarded their first job after graduation as a stepping stone: 37 per cent suggested that graduates remain for less than two years, 63 per cent thought graduates might stay for between two and five years and none believed that graduates would stay with their first employer for more than five years. This is a decisive change since the days of government allocated jobs and hints at the dominance of a market driven economy and related work practices. It could also suggest the value of work experience and getting a ‘foot in the door’ (“springboard to success” 成功跳板) as a strategic approach to obtaining more satisfying long term employment. This movement could also be a result of the curriculum not providing adequate workplace learning, and therefore moving jobs is a strategic approach to acquiring the practical knowledge and skills.

## 7.11 Summary

For graduating students the preceding analyses suggest that the student location and skill development are independent; that is, there is no *relationship* between where a student is studying and what a student rates as the important skills that employers are seeking. The hypotheses were tested by examining the frequencies obtained in cross tabulations of the variables and then by using Mann Whitney tests to determine if there were any statistically significant differences. With a larger sample set it would be possible to perform tests that would generate more decisive results. On this dataset it can be concluded that for most skills Chinese students in a VU Bachelor of Business have similar perceptions about the importance and frequency of developing the nominated skills.

The similarity between Melbourne Chinese students and Liaoning Chinese students has two implications. One is that the impact of being in Melbourne on Chinese students is minimal with regard to the personal characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills investigated in this thesis. A second is that the student data can be combined as one group and compared to lecturer and employer data. Some differences were noted between the graduating students and the lecturers’ perceptions. The few differences found related to the teaching context and the geographical location.

The minimal impact in these domains of studying outside of China is noteworthy and is explored in Chapter Nine. Briefly, in the data collected and presented in Chapter Eight, some Chinese employers stated that they had reservations about employing Western educated Chinese graduates as they “did not

fit in”. While both groups of Chinese graduates in this research were VU educated, one group was physically located for a period in “the West”. It is possible that one or both groups; that is, those receiving Western education in China and those doing so outside China, developed characteristics that Chinese employers regard as not “fitting in”, or indeed that these students might have attributes which would make it difficult to fit into conservative working environments. In this study the employers interviewed were not specifically referring to VU graduates. Further research could investigate what are perceived as the critical factors to “fitting in”.

Data was collected from Chinese lecturers who teach a Chinese undergraduate business course (“non-VU partners”) and from Chinese lecturers who teach in China an Australian university Bachelor of Business course (“VU partners”). One purpose of the above discussion was to determine the extent to which the sample respondent groups of lecturers agreed or disagreed. There were only a few skills to which the two groups responded in a statistically and significantly different manner. In the sections with maximum variation, that is where responses to three items differed, this was 13 per cent of the total items. It should also be noted that there was some consistency; for example *following directions without question* was an item that always returned a significantly different result.

In the next chapter survey and interview data from employers is analysed to determine their perceptions about certain personal characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills that contribute to their newly recruited graduates’ employability skills. It is then compared with the data from lecturers and students presented in this chapter.

## **Chapter Eight What the Employers said compared to the Graduating Students and Lecturers**

### **8.0 Introduction**

Two methods were used to collect data from employers in China - interviews and survey. All interviewees completed the survey, but not all survey respondents were interviewed. The selection criteria required all employer participants to be involved in selection and recruitment activities. The range of HR practices in China meant this role was not necessarily explicit in the participants' workplace titles.

The interviewees were recruited through the researcher's personal contacts from CPA Beijing, Australia Education International, Australian Chamber of Commerce Beijing (AustCham Beijing), the National Institute of Accountants Beijing and local Chinese universities. Twelve individual face-to-face interviews were conducted, mostly with the Chinese "broker" present who also acted as interpreter if required; six were in Beijing and six in Liaoning, a major industrial city in north-eastern China and the source of most of the educational data in Chapter Seven. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. The core interview questions (Appendix J) focused on the importance of certain skills in new graduate employees and the environmental aspects which shape the effective management of human resources. Qualitative analysis of the interview data focused on participants' comments on the graduate skills, their individual perspectives of current HRM practices, and HR issues and challenges facing their organisations. The data collected was used to support and expand on the survey data.

Twenty-one employers in China completed a similar survey to that completed by graduating students and lecturers. Of the survey's five sections, the first section on demographics was unique to the employer survey. The next three sections were identical to the student and lecturer surveys. An additional section in the student and lecturer survey contained questions about the curriculum focus and lecturer encouragement; but such questions were not applicable to the employers and hence not included in the employer survey. Instead, the last section of the employer survey explored employers' views of new graduates, graduates whom they had employed in the last two years and the importance of both groups of graduates displaying certain personal characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills.

#### **8.0.1 Analysis**

This data was collected on the basis that external factors such as organisation type, ownership and size contribute to different operations and perceptions. In the following analysis, due to insufficient completed surveys in any of the logical comparative sub-groups (level of management, business size,

ownership type), all employer data has been pooled. Therefore it was not possible to determine the impact of individual external factors on responses. The small sample also limits the generalisations that can be made from the data.

The employer data will be examined firstly in isolation, and then in comparison with the combined onshore and offshore student data and the combined partner and non-partner lecturer data. Where appropriate the Mann-Whitney Test was used to determine if any significant differences existed and if so, in what direction according to the Mean Rank and Sum of Ranks. In addition to the survey and interviews, websites and business documents and the existing research literature informed the analysis.

## **8.1 Employers – profile and details of business**

The 21 Chinese employers surveyed identified themselves as middle or senior managers (95 per cent), 75 per cent had been in the role for less than 10 years and the businesses were mostly in the 20 – 200 employee range (11/21) but four had less than 20 employees and six had more than 200. The types of businesses represented by the respondents were: 33.3 per cent family owned and operated only in China, 14.3 per cent family owned and operated in China but also in overseas locations, 4.76 per cent (that is, one) state-owned enterprise, 14.3 per cent from government departments, 23.8 per cent from international business organisations and 9.5 per cent from multinational business organisations.

All respondents had at least an undergraduate qualification; nearly half had higher degrees but only one respondent had a Doctorate (in the Sciences). With regard to future professional development, general management and non-specific job skills training were most frequently mentioned (60 per cent); further accounting and financial knowledge by 20 per cent, technical and computer skills training was mentioned by 10 per cent and communication skills development by 10 per cent. Mostly the interview and survey responses about professional development were vague which on one hand seems surprising for a middle or senior manager, but on the other hand may reflect their belief that they already possess the necessary skills. It may also reflect the traditional work environment in China where period of service is a key factor in promotion. While the responses do not address the shortage of managerial talent that Chow (2004 ) and others maintain exists, one interviewee acknowledged that some current employees were interested in and capable of acquiring managerial skills, and this was an alternative to hiring externally. Another interviewee mentioned generational differences in China, confirming Chen's (2008, interview) view that "older Chinese are happy with abstract ideas ... there is a very deep generation gap. Young managers are ambitious".

Professional development and company training programs were viewed by some respondents as synonymous. Two employers, as well as several lecturers and graduating students, stated that there

were regular meetings to ensure that “you know how to think and act”. These were not necessarily labelled as political or cultural, but as compulsory training meetings. This supports Chow’s (2004, p. 635) assertion that “In state-owned firms, training courses also include cultural-political components aimed at indoctrinating employees with Communist ideology, moral values and patriotism”. Chow explores the idea of the learning organization encouraged in high-tech firms and foreign-invested enterprises. It is apparent from the interviews in this study that cultural political training programs also occur in these organisations with a focus on establishing or reinforcing a corporate identity. Interestingly, about one third of respondents’ organisations could be classified as learning organisations, but none used the term.

### 8.1.1 Personal characteristics

When asked about personal characteristics for graduating students, Chinese employers rated *hard working* and *open minded* as the most important attributes, followed by *honest*, and then *positive* and *cooperative*. At the other end of the scale, *assertive* and *happy* were least important with *mature*, *punctual* and *risk taking* rated only marginally higher.

There was no exact agreement across the three groups about the importance of these personal characteristics (Table 45). However, employers, graduating students and lecturers all nominated *cooperative*, both employers and graduating students selected *open minded*, both employers and lecturers selected *hardworking*, and graduating students and lecturers both selected *confident*. Employers alone selected *honest* and *positive*.

For the least important attributes, *happy* and *risk taker* were chosen by all three groups. Employers and lecturers both selected *assertive* and *mature*. Only employers chose *punctual* and only graduating students chose *enthusiastic*.

**Table 38 Employer, student and lecturer perceptions of the important personal characteristics**

Most important – Employers	Most important - Graduating Students	Most important - Lecturers
hardworking / open minded	cooperative	cooperative
honest	confident	hardworking
cooperative / positive	Open minded	confident
Less important – Employers	Less important - Graduating Students	Less important - Lecturers
assertive	happy	risk taker
happy	enthusiastic	happy
mature / punctual / risk taker	risk taker	assertive; mature

### 8.1.2 General attributes

Question eight (which is the same as question six in the lecturer and student surveys) can firstly be described in terms of the percentage frequencies of the responses. The bolded figure in each row is the highest percentage frequency. Secondly, by allocating 1, 2, 3 and 4 to the categories of “Not Important”, “Slightly Important”, “Quite Important” and “Highly Important”, respectively, the mean can be calculated; the highest and lowest are bolded. Table 46 shows the response frequencies and the means.

**Table 39 Employer perceptions of the importance of certain general attributes**

8. 求职毕业生应: Graduating Students should:	不重要 Not important	较重要 Slightly important	重要 Quite important	很重要 Highly important	Employer Mean
参与社会活动，如体育运动，兴趣爱好 be involved in community activities such as sport or hobbies	28.6	28.6	<b>38.1</b>	4.8	2.19
学习成绩优秀 have high marks	19.0	<b>42.9</b>	28.6	9.5	2.29
了解本地风俗习惯 know about local customs and traditions	19.0	33.3	<b>42.9</b>	4.8	2.33
了解世界政治局势 know about world politics	23.8	<b>57.1</b>	14.3	4.8	2.00
了解其他地区的一些风俗 know some of the customs of other places	28.6	<b>47.6</b>	14.3	4.8*	<b>1.95</b>
毕业于重点院校 come from a good university	28.6	<b>38.1</b>	23.8	9.5	2.14
懂得何时服从 know when to conform	0.00	19.0	<b>57.1</b>	23.8	3.05
注重人际关系 value relationships	0.00	23.8	<b>42.9</b>	33.3	3.10
具有高尚品德 have high morals	0.00	4.8	38.1	<b>57.1</b>	3.52
意识到个人行为对习惯和传统的影响 be aware of the impact of their actions on customs and traditions	4.8	23.8	<b>52.4</b>	14.3*	2.80
具有责任心 show commitment	0.00	4.8	19.0	<b>76.2</b>	<b>3.71</b>
注重谐调统一 value harmony	4.8	19.0	<b>52.4</b>	23.8	2.95
乐于尝试新事物，接受新挑战 show a willingness to try new ideas / tasks	0.00	4.8	<b>52.4</b>	42.9	3.38
只专注于所分配的工作 focus only on the task at hand	28.6	<b>33.3</b>	<b>33.3</b>	4.8	2.14

\* These two rows do not total 100 per cent due to incomplete data responses.

Noting the range of responses by the employers within the frequencies, some skills were rated “Not Important” such as *Be involved in community activities*, *Know some of the customs of other places*, *Come from a good university* and *Focus only on the task at hand*, but it was never rated as “Not important” to *know when to conform*, *value relationships*, *have high morals*, *show commitment*, and

*show a willingness to try new ideas*. At the other end of the scale, *showing commitment* was “Highly Important” for more than 75 per cent of the respondents.

For the question about the importance of certain general attributes, three comparisons could be made: employers and lecturers, graduating students and lecturers, and employers and graduating students. The significant values according to the Mann-Whitney Test are bolded and annotated with an asterisk. See Table 47.

**Table 40 Comparisons of the respondents to the importance of certain general attributes**

8. 求职毕业生应 Graduating Students should:	Employer v Lecturer	Student v Lecturer	Employer v Student
参与社会活动，如体育运动，兴趣爱好 be involved in community activities such as sport or hobbies	.161	.784	.081
学习成绩优秀 have high marks	<b>.044*</b>	<b>.021*</b>	.515
了解本地风俗习惯 know about local customs and traditions	.536	<b>.025*</b>	<b>.023*</b>
了解世界政治局势 know about world politics	.138	<b>.006*</b>	<b>.000*</b>
了解其他地区的一些风俗 know some of the customs of other places	.848	<b>.003*</b>	<b>.025*</b>
毕业于重点院校 come from a good university	.634	.397	.953
懂得何时服从 know when to conform	.771	<b>.015*</b>	<b>.018*</b>
注重人际关系 value relationships	.464	.876	.388
具有高尚品德 have high morals	.862	.098	.142
意识到个人行为对习惯和传统的影响 be aware of the impact of their actions on customs and traditions	.235	.141	.768
具有责任心 show commitment	.888	<b>.026*</b>	.086
注重协调统一 value harmony	.324	.596	.401
乐于尝试新事物，接受新挑战 show a willingness to try new ideas / tasks	.358	.269	<b>.047*</b>
只专注于所分配的工作 focus only on the task at hand	.539	.596	.810

\* p<0.05.

Employers and lecturers differed significantly on only one item. Lecturers rated more important than employers that graduating students should *have high marks* (U=344.5, p=.044).

Graduating student compared to lecturer responses showed more variation, with significant differences on six of the 14 items. In the following three instances of significance, lecturers rated the attribute more important than graduating students:

1. Graduating students should *have high marks* (U=2632.5, p=.021)
2. Graduating students should *know when to conform* (U=2639.0, p=.015)

3. Graduating students should *know when to show commitment* (U=2733.5, p=0.026).

In the following three instances of significance, graduating students rated the following attributes as more important than lecturers:

1. Graduating students should *know about local customs and traditions* (U=2727.0, p=.025)
2. Graduating students should *know about world politics* (U=2504.0, p=.006)
3. Graduating students should *know some of the customs of other places* (U=2462.5, p=.003)

Comparing employers and graduating students, five items were significantly different. Four were the same items where differences existed between lecturers and graduating students, namely *knowing about local customs and traditions*, *knowing about world politics*, *knowing about some of the customs of other places*, and *knowing when to conform*. The same three attributes which graduating students rated as more important than lecturers, they also rated as more important than the employers. The additional item for which there was significant difference between employers and graduating students was for *showing a willingness to try new ideas*, which employers ranked as more important than graduating students.

In the following three instances of significance, graduating students rated the attribute more important than employers:

1. Graduating students should *know about local customs and traditions* (U=1093.5, p=.023),
2. Graduating students should *know about world politics* (U=827.5, p=0.00)
3. Graduating students should *know some of the customs of other places* (U=1044.0, p=.025)

In the following two instances of significance, employers rated the attribute more important than graduating students:

1. Graduating students should *know when to conform* (U=1066.5, p=.018), and
2. Graduating students should *show a willingness to try new ideas* (U=1129.5, p=.047).

An alternative way of analysing the data is comparing the means. For the question asking employers to rate the importance of certain attributes for graduating students, they should *show commitment* received the highest mean (3.7). The least important was graduating students should *know some of the customs of other places* (1.95). This item however had data missing due to an incomplete survey so cannot usefully be differentiated from *know about world politics* (2.0).



The means for the responses for each item were compared across graduating students, lecturers and employers and were significant for the items in Table 48 below. The statistical significance of the Mann-Whitney tests above is corroborated by the ANOVA below.

**Table 41 Comparison of respondents' means for importance of certain general attributes**

<b>The importance of certain attributes</b>	<b>ANOVA</b>	
<b>Graduating Students should:</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Significance</b>
be involved in community activities such as sport or hobbies	<b>3.401</b>	<b>0.020</b>
know about local customs and traditions	<b>4.518</b>	<b>0.005</b>
know about world politics	<b>6.241</b>	<b>0.001</b>
know some of the customs of other places	<b>3.161</b>	<b>0.027</b>
know when to conform	<b>2.742</b>	<b>0.046</b>

Where the differences lie can be observed in Table 49 which shows the individual group means. The bolded rows are the significant results. Students and employers consistently have opposing perceptions with the lecturers usually somewhere between.

Table 42 Statistical comparison of means showing all respondent groups

General Attributes	Students in Melbourne	Students in China	VU- Partner teachers	Non- Partner teachers	Employers	SIG	F statistic
<b>Graduating students should: be involved in community activities such as sport or hobbies</b>	<b>2.46</b>	<b>2.84</b>	<b>2.59</b>	<b>2.55</b>	<b>2.20</b>	<b>.024</b>	2.877
Graduating students should: have high marks	2.43	2.35	2.94	2.62	2.30	.058	2.324
<b>Graduating students should: know about local customs and traditions</b>	<b>2.85</b>	<b>2.69</b>	<b>2.35</b>	<b>2.57</b>	<b>2.35</b>	<b>.020</b>	2.979
<b>Graduating students should: know about world politics</b>	<b>2.61</b>	<b>2.73</b>	<b>2.47</b>	<b>2.21</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>.001</b>	4.663
Graduating students should: know some of the customs of other places	2.33	2.33	2.06	1.93	1.95	.069	2.214
Graduating students should: come from a good university	2.04	2.31	2.00	2.37	2.15	.295	1.240
<b>Graduating students should: know when to conform</b>	<b>2.54</b>	<b>2.81</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>2.93</b>	<b>3.05</b>	<b>.012</b>	3.322
Graduating students should: value relationships	3.26	3.23	3.18	3.23	3.10	.854	.335
Graduating students should: have high morals	3.32	3.23	3.29	3.53	3.50	.409	1.000
Graduating students should: be aware of the impact of their actions on customs and traditions	2.82	2.65	2.82	2.45	2.80	.176	1.601
Graduating students should: show commitment	3.55	3.38	3.65	3.70	3.70	.082	2.099
Graduating students should: value harmony	3.13	3.10	3.18	3.10	2.90	.723	.517
Graduating students should: show a willingness to try new ideas / tasks	2.99	3.08	2.94	3.30	3.35	.200	1.512
Graduating students should: focus only on the task at hand	2.09	2.19	2.29	1.83	2.20	.416	.986

### 8.1.3 Workplace skills

There were two sets of questions on workplace skills. The first asked employers about the importance for new graduates of certain workplace skills, and the second asked employers to think of graduates whom they had employed in the last two years and how important those skills are now.

#### 8.1.3.1 New Graduates

Question nine for the employers was essentially the same as Question seven for the lecturers and graduating students. Table 50 lists the frequencies for each response by the employers as percentages and also the means.

Table 43 Employers' perceptions of new graduates' workplace skills

9. 求职毕业生在工作中能够: New Graduates in the workplace should be able to:	不重要 Not important	较重要 Slightly important	重要 Quite important	很重要 Highly important	Employer Mean
团队合作work in teams	0.00	0.00	33.3	66.7	<b>3.67</b>
思维敏捷think quickly	0.00	19.0	<b>57.1</b>	23.8	3.05
表达个人观点argue for what they think is right	0.00	9.5	<b>76.2</b>	9.5	3.00
善于解决问题solve problems	0.00	14.3	19.0	<b>66.7</b>	3.52
考虑他人意见consider other people's points of view	0.00	19.0	<b>47.6</b>	28.6	3.10
使用电脑处理一般性工作 use the computer for general office tasks	4.8	23.8	<b>47.6</b>	23.8	2.90
敢于做决定make decisions	14.3	<b>42.9</b>	38.1	4.8	<b>2.33</b>
书写报告write reports	4.8	47.6	47.6	0.00	2.43
尊重同事respect their colleagues	0.00	0.00	<b>61.9</b>	33.3	3.35
应用所学知识apply their knowledge	4.8	33.3	<b>47.6</b>	14.3	2.71
运用中、英文交流communicate in Chinese and English	9.5	<b>33.3</b>	28.6	28.6	2.76
洞察和预见问题notice problems and possibilities as they arise	4.8	19.0	33.3	<b>42.9</b>	3.14
联系不同学科体系make links between different subjects	19.0	23.8	<b>52.4</b>	4.8	2.43
区分工作重点identify the most important tasks	0.00	4.8	<b>61.9</b>	33.3	3.29
具有独立创新的见解come up with new ideas	0.00	19.0	<b>66.7</b>	14.3	2.95
服从领导follow directions without question	23.8	23.8	<b>42.9</b>	9.5	2.38
独立工作work without supervision	9.5	9.5	<b>57.1</b>	23.8	2.95
激励他人motivate others	9.5	<b>42.9</b>	38.1	9.5	2.48
按期完成工作任务complete tasks within a deadline	0.00	19.0	38.1	<b>42.9</b>	3.24
承受压力perform well under pressure	4.8	14.3	<b>47.6</b>	33.3	3.10
收集相关工作信息gather information	0.00	23.8	<b>47.6</b>	28.6	3.05

建立人际关系build relationships	0.00	19.0	<b>57.1</b>	23.8	3.05
了解所从事工作的社会价值 see the value of their job outside the workplace	9.5	19.0	<b>52.4</b>	19.0	2.81

There were 11 items which no employer classified as “Not Important” and there was one item (*write reports*) which no employer thought was “Highly Important”. The highest percentage frequency for each item is in bold. Overall the highest frequency was 76.2 per cent for “Quite Important” that new graduates *argue for what they think is right*.

For workplace skills, three comparisons were made: employers and lecturers, graduating students and lecturers, and employers and graduating students. Using the Mann-Whitney test some significant differences were found. The significant values are both bolded and annotated with an asterisk in Table 51.

**Table 44 Comparisons between the three respondent groups**

9. 求职毕业生在工作中能够: New Graduates in the workplace should be able to:	Employer v Lecturer	Student v Lecturer	Employer v Student
团队合作work in teams	.415	.156	.063
思维敏捷think quickly	.921	.473	.685
表达个人观点argue for what they think is right	.134	<b>.009*</b>	.580
善于解决问题solve problems	.105	.655	<b>.036*</b>
考虑他人意见consider other people's points of view	.372	.086	.850
使用电脑处理一般性工作 use the computer for general office tasks	.410	.190	.981
敢于做决定make decisions	.396	<b>.000*</b>	<b>.000*</b>
书写报告write reports	.410	.379	.088
尊重同事respect their colleagues	.139	.359	.447
应用所学知识apply their knowledge	.264	.476	.063
运用中、英文交流communicate in Chinese and English	1.00	<b>.000*</b>	<b>.008*</b>
洞察和预见问题notice problems and possibilities as they arise	.113	.564	.071
联系不同学科体系make links between different subjects	.692	.062	.416
区分工作重点identify the most important tasks	.253	.527	<b>.050*</b>
具有独立创新的见解come up with new ideas	.477	.659	.185
服从领导follow directions without question	.313	.857	.283
独立工作work without supervision	.954	.966	.996
激励他人motivate others	.839	<b>.047*</b>	.071
按期完成工作任务complete tasks within a deadline	.648	.823	.492
承受压力perform well under pressure	.763	.103	.439

收集相关工作信息gather information	.076	<b>.008*</b>	.832
建立人际关系build relationships	.722	<b>.034*</b>	<b>.030*</b>
了解所从事工作的社会价值 see the value of their job outside the workplace	.385	<b>.037*</b>	.664

\*  $p < 0.05$

Employers and lecturers did not significantly differ in how importantly they regarded any of the 23 items in this section. Graduating students and lecturers differed significantly on seven items.

Employers and graduating students only differed significantly on five of the 23 items. This suggests more common understanding of the skills needed in the workplace than the literature review indicated and hence anticipated as an outcome of this study. It also suggests that the degree of importance of the various skills represented within each item should be not discounted for its role in determining a set of skills which are relevant to the Chinese workplace.

Comparing graduating students and lecturers, there were several instances of significant difference. In all instances of significant difference, the graduating student rated the skill as more important than the lecturer:

1. New graduates should be able to *argue for what they think is right* ( $U=2593.5$ ,  $p=0.009$ )
2. New graduates should be able to *make decisions* ( $U=2234.5$ ,  $p=0.000$ )
3. New graduates should be able to *communicate in English and Chinese* ( $U=1994.0$ ,  $p=0.000$ )
4. New graduates should be able to *motivate others* ( $U=2769.0$ ,  $p=0.047$ )
5. New graduates should be able to *gather information* ( $U=2586.0$ ,  $p=0.008$ )
6. New graduates should be able to *build relationships* ( $U=2746.5$ ,  $p=0.034$ )
7. New graduates should *see the value of their job outside the workplace* ( $U=2588.5$ ,  $p=0.037$ ).

Graduating students rated it more important than employers that:

1. New graduates should be able to *make decisions* ( $U=797.5$ ,  $p=0.000$ )
2. New graduates should be able to *communicate in English and Chinese* ( $U=1019.0$ ,  $p=0.008$ )
3. New graduates should be able to *build relationships* ( $U=1109.5$ ,  $p=0.030$ ).

Employers rated it more important than graduating students that:

1. New graduates should be able to *solve problems* ( $U=1125.0$ ,  $p=0.036$ )
2. New graduates should be able to *identify the most important tasks* ( $U=1156.0$ ,  $p=0.050$ )

Comparing the means across the items, the most important skill for graduates entering the workplace is that they should be able to *work in teams* (mean = 3.7; median = 4; mode = 4, sd = 0.48); the least important is that they should be able to *make decisions* (mean = 2.3; median = 2; mode = 2; sd = 0.79).

The means for the responses for each item were compared across graduating students, lecturers and employers and were significant for the items in Table 52 below. The statistical significance of the Mann-Whitney tests above is corroborated by the ANOVA below.

**Table 45 Comparison of means for the respondents**

The importance of certain workplace skills	ANOVA	
	F	Significance
<b>New Graduates should:</b>		
argue for what they think is right	<b>3.873</b>	<b>0.011</b>
make decisions	<b>13.347</b>	<b>0.000</b>
write reports	<b>4.393</b>	<b>0.006</b>
communicate in Chinese and English	<b>6.249</b>	<b>0.001</b>
follow directions without question	<b>4.910</b>	<b>0.003</b>
motivate others	<b>3.654</b>	<b>0.014</b>

### 8.1.3.2 Recently Employed Graduates

Question 10 was unique to the employer survey. Its purpose was to triangulate responses from earlier questions. The following Table 53 presents the frequency of each response to each item as a percentage, and the mean response for each item for the employer group. The highest frequency for each item and the highest and lowest means within each frequency have been bolded for easier reading.

**Table 46 Frequencies and means for employers' perceptions of recently employed graduates**

10.参照在近两年内所聘用的毕业生情况，您认为以下行为和态度的重要性如何？ When thinking about the graduates you have employed in the last 2 years, how important is it that they display these behaviours and attitudes?	不重要 Not important	较重要 Slightly important	重要 Quite important	很重要 Highly important	Mean
专心从事本职工作 concentrate well on given tasks	0.00	0.00	47.6	<b>52.4</b>	3.52
在不同场合的人际交往能力 relate well to people in a range of settings	0.00	28.6	33.3	<b>38.1</b>	3.10
批判性思维 think clearly and critically	9.5	19.0	<b>42.9</b>	28.6	2.90
乐于独立工作 prefer to work alone	19.0	<b>33.3</b>	<b>33.3</b>	14.3	2.43
按时并出色地完成分配的工作 complete tasks to a high standard and on time	0.00	0.00	33.3	<b>66.7</b>	<b>3.67</b>
适时恰当地展示领导才能 display leadership appropriately	0.00	33.3	<b>57.1</b>	9.5	2.76
易于从指定工作分心 are easily distracted from set tasks	<b>38.1</b>	28.6	19.0	9.5*	<b>2.00</b>

积极热情地参与各种活动 participate enthusiastically in activities	9.5	28.6	<b>42.9</b>	19.0	2.71
创新性解决问题 are creative problem solvers	0.00	14.3	38.1	<b>42.9*</b>	3.30
对所分配工作有理解困难 struggle to understand the work presented	<b>33.3</b>	28.6	28.6	4.8*	2.05
需要他人协作来完成工作任务 need additional support with their work	14.3	<b>47.6</b>	33.3	4.8*	2.29
善于联系本职工作与外界工作环境 connect the outside workplace with their jobs	14.3	23.8	<b>47.6</b>	14.3	2.62
礼貌友善地完成指示 fulfil instructions courteously	4.8	33.3	<b>38.1</b>	23.8	2.81

\* These four rows do not total 100 per cent due to incomplete data responses.

Looking at the responses where the frequency percentages are greater than 50 per cent shows that *concentration, completing tasks to a high standard on time, and displaying leadership appropriately* are all perceived as important behaviours. If the mean is also considered, then the most important skill for graduates who have been in the workplace for two years or less is that they can *complete tasks to a high standard on time* (mean = 3.7; median = 4.0; mode = 4.0; sd = 0.48); the least important is that they are *easily distracted from set tasks* (mean = 2.0; median = 2.0; mode = 1.0; sd = 1.0) and that they *struggle to understand the work presented* (mean = 2.05; median = 2.0; mode = 1.0; sd = 0.9). See Table 54.

**Table 47 Employer responses to statements about behaviours and attitudes from highest to lowest mean ranking**

	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
Employees complete tasks to high standard & on time	3.67	4.00	4	.483
Employees concentrate well on given tasks	3.52	4.00	4	.512
Employees are creative problem solvers	3.30	3.00	4	.733
Employees relate well to people in a range of settings	3.10	3.00	4	.831
Employees think clearly and critically	2.90	3.00	3	.944
Employees fulfil instructions courteously	2.81	3.00	3	.873
Employees display leadership appropriately	2.76	3.00	3	.625
Employees participate enthusiastically in activities	2.71	3.00	3	.902
Employees connect the outside workplace with their jobs	2.62	3.00	3	.921
Employees prefer to work alone	2.43	2.00	2	.978
Employees need additional support with their work	2.29	2.00	2	.784
Employees struggle to understand the work presented	2.05	2.00	1	.945
Employees are easily distracted from set task	2.00	2.00	1	1.026

#### 8.1.4 Interviews

In depth interviews with employers asked exploratory questions around the concept of graduate skills. Responses have been grouped in relation to VU's Graduate Capabilities to determine if there is an alignment between the two. The grouping was performed initially by the researcher and then modified after discussion with two independent Chinese educators, both of whom had been involved previously with interpreting and translating. The reference beside each quote in Table 55 refers to whether it was a small to medium sized enterprise (SME) or a joint venture organisation (JVO) which in this research were always larger than SMEs. Each interviewee's organisation was also allocated a unique numerical code (Table 55).

Some quotes, such as "...we do not expect recruits to do this" (JVO4) and "Do not change job at a high frequency" (JVO1), rather than show an alignment clearly suggest a disjunction.

**Table 48 Quotes from employer interviews**



VU's Graduate Capability: "all VU graduates should be able to..."	Thematic analysis supported by representative quotes from Chinese Employers: Small-medium sized enterprises	Thematic analysis supported by representative quotes from Chinese Employers: Joint venture organisations
<p>problem solve in a range of settings</p>	<p>Flexibility</p> <p>Independence (conditional)</p> <p>Change in job descriptions ("relocation")</p> <p>Change in work location ("relocation")</p> <p>-----</p> <p><i>"Employers think the employees should be flexible enough to deal with different situations. There might not be sufficient work training in the work unit so one should learn to solve problems by oneself in some occasions" (SME 2)</i></p> <p><i>"The relocation of work is commonly seen in private-owned companies, so one must be flexible enough to survive. This is a fairly practical "ability to survive" in Chinese organizations" (SME 3).</i></p> <p><i>"A lot of new graduates are not recruited by the employers after the "internship" or "test period" due to lack of this ability but the graduates do not understand this. They think they are rejected because "I have no work experience". Chinese employer's comment is "they have lack of practical work experience", which does not help the education organizations to improve because the education part would say "they will never be experienced if you do not give them a chance to practice" (SME 5).</i></p> <p><i>"...solve problems, yes, but not be loud" (SME 6).</i></p> <p><i>"It is important to help your boss...he should not lose face" (SME 6).</i></p> <p><i>"...some decisions are possible but there are many things to know" (SME 7).</i></p> <p><i>"Understand leaders'/boss ideas at once" (SME 8).</i></p>	<p>Flexibility</p> <p>-----</p> <p><i>"...this is the basic requirement for a person" (JVO 1)</i></p> <p><i>"...we need to solve the problems by all means" (JVO 1)</i></p> <p><i>"Learning to do a project in subjects is a very good way to learn to solve the problems and this should be encouraged from primary school to high education" (JVO 2).</i></p> <p><i>"There is a lack of emphasis on "problem solving" in Chinese education field" (JVO 2).</i></p> <p><i>"...if required, provide some suggestions for the leader" (JVO 3).</i></p> <p><i>"...we do not expect the recruits to do this" (JVO 4).</i></p> <p><i>"...sometimes they cannot think widely" (JVO 4).</i></p> <p><i>"Graduates lack practical work ability" (JVO 4).</i></p> <p><i>"...learn from the experience of others" (JVO 4).</i></p>
<p>locate, critically evaluate, manage and use written, numerical and electronic information</p>	<p>Not an entry level skill</p> <p>Application may be inconsistent with business culture at entry level</p> <p>-----</p> <p><i>"As a junior they would not be asked to be critical"</i></p>	<p>Self analysis</p> <p>Self management</p> <p>Use of systems</p> <p>-----</p>

	<p>(SME 6).</p> <p><i>“This is not as highly valued as in western society although it is required for finalize one’s work at a specific position. This is because a lot of the Employers are from small or medium sized organizations and there might not be a fixed work procedures and strict policies in such organizations. Staff are rewarded by the actual performance (sales) instead of writing good reports”</i> (SME 5).</p>	<p><i>“...being critical of ideas needs to be done carefully”</i> (JVO 3).</p> <p><i>“...help us to analyse ourselves, to analyse what are our strengths and shortage, advantages and disadvantages, what we want to be, make a goals for our life, and then make a plan, how long and how we can achieve our goals”</i> (JVO 1).</p> <p><i>“...generally not paid enough attention to at the moment due to the development stage of our organization”</i> (JVO 2).</p> <p><i>“...the financial work and some administrative work rely on the computer softwares. Only big organizations have installed systematic softwares such as ERP etc”</i> (JVO 2).</p> <p><i>“Mostly they can write reports just on the facts... not with additional information”</i> (JVO 4).</p>
communicate in a variety of contexts and modes	<p>Preference for face to face interactions</p> <p>-----</p> <p><i>“This is more or less just verbal communication at the present stage”</i> (SME 1).</p> <p><i>“In most organizations, phone-calls, fax, and face to face are still the most taken approaches to work”</i> (SME 7).</p> <p><i>“More attention on communication is paid when large sized organizations recruit”</i> (SME 5).</p> <p><i>“Now it is highly valued in the “government positions recruiting examination”... Very high standards have been set for both writing subject and face to face interview”</i> (SME 5).</p>	<p>Highly important skill</p> <p>-----</p> <p><i>“Chinese graduates should be more confident”</i> (JVO 1).</p> <p><i>“...we use our networks”</i> (JVO 2).</p> <p><i>“In our life, communication is the bridge among people. For an employee, he needs to communicate with his colleagues, his director, other department, other companies and the customers. During the flexible communication, he can know what he should improve, what is the better way to do that project”(JVO 2).</i></p> <p><i>“If someone is misunderstanding you, you have problems with other department or your customers, communication plays the crucial role under such</i></p>

		<p>situations". "Generally speaking, some problems can be handled by the effective and flexible communication" (JVO 3).</p> <p>If you are not good at communication, you need to practice because it is helpful for personal development and will improve working efficiency" (JVO 4).</p> <p>"The way we talk and use email is different" (JVO 5).</p>
work both autonomously and collaboratively	<p>Autonomy is expected</p> <p>Collaboration desirable but not encouraged</p> <p>-----</p> <p>"...sometimes together, sometimes alone... it is hard to know which is best sometimes" (SME 7).</p> <p>"There is a 'you need to perform better than others' pressure in the society" (SME 4).</p> <p>"Great attention has been paid on the autonomous work but not the collaborative work" (SME 3).</p> <p>"Autonomous work is definitely what a employer expects at the moment but collaborative work is something that Chinese Employers unconsciously do not encourage. There are various kinds of in-house training and outside sessions that Chinese organizations are paying for the staff but there are few of them are about "team-building" or "work collaboratively"" (SME 5).</p> <p>"...the fierce competition... but ironically not much has been done on "collaborate to achieve" in a so called "collectivism culture " (SME 6).</p> <p>"It is common that the cooperate [corporation] is very successful in making profits and at the same time the [autonomous] cooperate [corporate] culture is making staff psychologically or physically ill (SME 7).</p> <p>"In the years to come Chinese leaders of organizations will realize that competition is not the only way to stimulate people and improve the overall performance of the organization but the collaboration" (SME 5).</p>	<p>Independence</p> <p>Relationships</p> <p>Teamwork is effective</p> <p>-----</p> <p>"Independent work capability [we] will practice ourselves, for instance, independent thinking, which is useful in our future development" (JVO 2).</p> <p>"Chinese graduates from overseas can be too proud" (JVO 2).</p> <p>"We develop relationships to help us" (JVO 3).</p> <p>"We will be strong and toughness through independent work. However, in a company, many assignments are handled by team work. Team work can create great values for a group, and when we are in a team, we can learn from others, we can practice our communication. The relationship between individuals and team just likes the small river and the sea" (JVO 4).</p> <p>"Work efficiently" (JVO 4).</p> <p>"Our international structure encourages autonomy but now we have to do some things with other</p>

		<i>departments” (JVO 5).</i>
work in an environmentally, socially and culturally responsible manner	<p>Loyalty is to employer</p> <p>-----</p> <p><i>“We must consider what is best for China”(SME 6)</i></p> <p><i>“In a typical Chinese employer’s mind the order of these responsibilities should be listed according to the importance (the most important comes as the first) as following:</i></p> <p><i>corporate culture</i></p> <p><i>culture</i></p> <p><i>society</i></p> <p><i>environment”</i></p> <p><i>“the young staff members should show respect” (SME 5).</i></p>	<p>Responsibility is ill-defined but required</p> <p>Chinese ways</p> <p>-----</p> <p><i>“Being responsible is an evaluation standard” (JVO 1).</i></p> <p><i>“...responsible is the basic quality for a person” (JVO 2).</i></p> <p><i>“We need to be responsible for our work, our colleague, and our company, for the society” (JVO 3).</i></p> <p><i>“Chinese graduates from overseas must remember Chinese ways” (JVO 3).</i></p> <p><i>“Morals are important” (JVO 4).</i></p> <p><i>“It’s hard to state the cultural differences but they certainly affect how we work” (JVO 5).</i></p>

manage learning and career development opportunities	<p>Individual rather than employer responsibility</p> <p>-----</p> <p><i>"It depends on the position" (SME 1).</i></p> <p><i>"In some companies the employers do not expect their employees to be "too ambitious" because they think this sort of staff will only learn what they want to learn at a position and then leave the organization as soon as they feel not satisfied with the salary or advancement" (SME 2).</i></p> <p><i>"No time to do this" (SME 4).</i></p> <p><i>"Self-learn from everyday work and pay extra effort to achieve more" (SME 7).</i></p> <p><i>"Chinese organisations do not regard providing advancement for staff as a responsibility" (SME 5).</i></p>	<p>Making the most of opportunities</p> <p>-----</p> <p><i>"Now I am a small shareholder so I will stay here forever even I am not so old" [39 years old] (JVO 1).</i></p> <p><i>"Do not change job at a high frequency" (JVO 1).</i></p> <p><i>"The organisation will arrange courses sometimes" (JVO 1).</i></p> <p><i>"Self-management is also important for our future development. When we know what we want and be self-strict, then we will approach success" (JVO 2).</i></p> <p><i>"During our career development, we will have many opportunities; however, when we have a good opportunity, firstly we must have all qualities that this opportunity requires, such as professional knowledge, skill" (JVO 3).</i></p> <p><i>"We need to learn, learn all the time, learn new knowledge, learn from others, by doing this, when the opportunity is coming, we can grasp it. As an old saying goes, one should always prepare for a rainy day" (JVO 4).</i></p>
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## 8.2 Websites

To complement the interview and survey data, a search was carried out of selected company documentation and job search websites, as mission statements and recruitment and selection information might have information on the importance of certain graduate skills and attributes.

### 8.2.1 Company documents

In this search, key word searches were chosen to include the range of ownership models and organisation sizes represented by the interview and survey respondents. The starting point was the businesses of the interviewees. Interestingly, a review of the Table of Contents of each of the 22 Chinese company profiles available for purchase through FriedlNet produced no focus on company

development by strategic use of HRM practices (Friedl Business Information 2010). The idea that HRM practices in China are often in the development phase is borne out by Wen Jiabao's *Report on the Work of the Government 2008*, in which he mentions the need to recruit foreign experts, "The strategy of reinvigorating China through development of human resources was extensively applied. Great efforts were made to train Chinese personnel, bring in needed personnel from other countries and make wise use of skilled personnel of all types, thus strengthening the ranks of high-caliber, highly skilled personnel in China" (2008, p. 1). These strategies are continuing.

On the other hand, Haier Co Ltd has comprehensive information online about the company's mission, philosophy and values. The words 'creativity' and 'innovation' are constantly mentioned, as well as promotion based on achievement, but with a management approach focused on control (see link in Table 77, Appendix N), business operations are obviously separated. When it comes to public relations, Nestle China demonstrated community engagement in building a school and donating library books in earthquake- torn Sichuan. This received positive press coverage, using language which reinforces the importance of morals: "Nestle China has 'Three-good' spirit: good morals, good study, good sporting" (Bao 2009, p. 1). Table 77 notes where some sample organisations fit within the ownership and size categories used in this research. The language used and the requirements specified differ to that used by the same and similar businesses in Australia.

### 8.2.2 Job search websites

Job search websites and organisations with an online presence were repeatedly mentioned by employers and graduating students as tools used either for hiring by employers or as "self-learning" avenues by graduating students. To understand their role and potential value to the current research they have been reviewed.

Zhaopin.com is one of two sites that Chinese employers reported using and graduates most commonly reported visiting. It is the Chinese arm of the British company Alliance (Zhaopin.com 2001). Businesses with positions available pay to advertise on its home page ([www.zhaopin.com](http://www.zhaopin.com)) and visitors to the site can search by location, company or job position.

International companies on zhaopin.com such as Deloitte<sup>31</sup> provide websites in Chinese and English. A typical graduate position advertised by Deloitte such as a consulting analyst for a Shanghai business requires:

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<sup>31</sup> Deloitte Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou and Shenzhen were named China's Top Employer for 2009, (Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, 2010)

- Background with business, accounting, information technology, human capital and financial services is preferred
- Demonstrated understanding and commitment in consulting professional
- Always take initiative and self motivated
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- Strong logical, analytical and presentation skills
- A strong team player (Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu 2008).

For ongoing learning and professional development, Deloitte Institute offers classroom and online courses that focus on competencies such as: core technical, industry expertise, service excellence, management effectiveness, leadership effectiveness, marketing, sales and communications (Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu 2008b).

Another representative example of a graduate position was the requirements for an Associate Auditor in Dalian, China: degree holder in any discipline; excellent communication and interpersonal skills; excellent planning, organization and leadership skills; initiative, self-motivated and committed; and proficiency in computer applications.

For a Project Manager position in Beijing with the Information Technology solutions business, Sinocode, the job required a person who:

- Can-do attitude
- Enjoys challenges
- Ability to work in a tight team
- Excellent time management
- Well developed problem solving skills
- Strong, effective communication skills
- English skills spoken/written CET-4, CET-6 (Sinocode 2005).

The other site commonly mentioned by graduates was [www.51jobs.com.cn](http://www.51jobs.com.cn) which is an umbrella site for many diverse employment and non-employment websites. It was not as focused as zhaopin.com on employment or as user friendly to a non-Mandarin speaker.

### 8.2.3 Hiring agencies websites

While there are a myriad of international recruitment agencies with a web presence, such as Ambition, few provide country specific information. In an article entitled “China Jobs Mature”, Ambition notes that job candidates are considering factors such as training and salaries, and that an ongoing skills gap

is making it hard to fill middle level management positions (Day 2006). More recently, Ambition's *Accounting and Finance Recruitment: Market Trends and Salaries Report, China* (2007) noted that:

...the demand is tailored. Companies are localising, salaries are stabilising, and the door is closing on job-hoppers whose CVs show too much opportunism and not enough commitment. There will be selective openings for expatriates and overseas returnees, but the price of playing a role in China's economic miracle in this new phase of development may be a reduction in expectations or a spell out in the country's second-tier cities (Ambition 2007).

Malcolm Pollard, general manager of the Australian human resources company, Lloyd Morgan Shanghai, with offices in Shanghai, Beijing and Shenzhen, was quoted in an online article as saying: "There's certainly a shortage of well qualified staff in the construction and related industries in China" (Loras 2008a, p. 1). The article noted that design institute graduates need experience with foreign businesses in order to develop the right sort of business and conceptual skills:

There's a local shortage in mid to executive-level management, both in terms of design and operational management and therefore those people with Mainland China experience are in high demand ... An understanding of the cultural nuances of doing business in China is highly desirable and thus there is great demand for talent of Chinese ethnicity such as Mainland Chinese returnees, Singaporeans, Malays and Hong Kongese (Loras 2008a, p. 1).

Loras believed that employers in the industry looked for staff with an understanding of Chinese business and language as well as the local business culture. "Most of the demand we are getting from foreign clients shows that they prefer a Chinese person in the post as long as they are foreign trained or educated and have been employed in a recognized firm for some of their career" (Loras 2008a). However, McCooey, the human resources and marketing director for consulting firm ACT Link China, preferred employing local Chinese: "You can find some bright candidates who have graduated from some of the good Chinese universities. Select someone who has some real skills and drive, someone who can be trained to make decisions" (Loras 2008b, p. 1). He highlighted the drawbacks with returning Chinese: "the trick with hiring Mainland Chinese with overseas education or management experience is finding someone with enough "real" experience. Many return to China with high salary expectations and can be several years out of touch with what is happening on the ground" (Loras 2008b, p. 1).

Similarly in the logistics field, Groebisch (cited in Hahn 2006, p. 1) argued: "There is no shortage of educated native Chinese managers, but native Chinese leaders with overseas experience, an international mindset and attitude as well as a relevant practical experience in logistics, are in short supply". The shortage may continue until the students in my study who rated as important skills such



as global, diversity and cultural knowledge become the employers. The employer participants rated such knowledge as of low importance.

Experience is a common theme. The “Goinglobal” website advises: “Employment trends for middle- to upper-level managers continue to indicate a preference for local, home grown professionals who possess both language skills and work experience. The demand is high for job seekers who have realistic salary expectations and possess critical skills that contribute directly to the company's bottom line” (Goinglobal 2008a, p. 1). Written for an American audience, it added:

With the business environment in a continuing state of flux, there are no rigid rules for the submission of a resume or CV. Generally, however, resumes and CVs should be roughly two pages in length and include the following sections: personal information, career objectives, work experience, education, and skills and accomplishments, in which you should highlight things like language skills, technical abilities, and so on. You may also briefly cite awards, promotions, or special recognitions you have received, but be modest about these (Goinglobal 2008b, p. 1).

While stressing punctuality, it cautioned:

Dress conservatively for your interview (dark business suits for the men, and suits or formal dresses for the women), and arrive on time; to be late is a serious insult. In the larger Chinese cities, a light handshake is the customary greeting, but it also may be a nod, or a bow. Follow the lead of the interviewer on the proper greeting. Often those present exchange business cards at the beginning. Have your card printed on both sides, with English or your native language on one side, and Chinese "simplified" (not "classical") characters on the other. Offer and receive cards with both hands... During the interview, be modest and respectful, keep your eyes lowered, maintain good posture and a quiet voice, and respect the frequent long moments of silence. Also, avoid boasting or exaggerating— your claims will be investigated (Goinglobal 2008c, p. 1).

Finally, under the heading of cultural advice, the site noted: “Complimenting and rewarding publicly is usually not done when living in China. Subordinates should show deference to their seniors; paternalistic concern is often shown by seniors to subordinates” (Goinglobal 2008d, p. 1). Cross cultural communication issues were discussed in earlier chapters and require significant skills that cannot be ignored by job applicants or Australian businesses in China (Chung 2009).

The website “china.jobs.com” clearly states that graduate applicants require:

- Strategic thinking, personal integrity and capability of analyzing, decision making, trouble shooting are essential
- Bold and prepared to challenge behavior inconsistent with the values
- Good communication (both written and spoken) skills in both Chinese and English
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills. Intermediate to high English skills preferred
- Excellent analytical skills
- Strong learning ability and motivation
- Strong presentation, sales, negotiation and influencing skills
- An organized, team approach
- Outstanding analytical and conceptual skills
- Highly driven and creative, and work well independently as well as in a team environment
- Speak and write convincingly and efficiently in English and the local language
- Creative- finds opportunities & solutions easily
- Creative and resourceful (china.jobs.com 2008).

Such requirements align closely with similar websites in Australia such as the GradCareers Australia advice centre website. It identifies ‘Skills Employers Seek in Graduates’ that include academic achievement in a relevant discipline, oral and written communication skills, interpersonal skills, teamwork skills, problem-solving skills, understanding of business processes; ‘Personal Attributes’ which include enthusiasm, motivation, ambition, maturity; and ‘Where Graduates Fall Short’ which include creativity and flair, oral business communications and problem-solving ability. The website also notes: “Unsuccessful graduate applicants are much more likely than successful graduate applicants to lack the capacity for, or at least not adequately demonstrate, independent and critical thinking. This attribute is of great importance to many employers and appears to be the skill that most sets apart successful from unsuccessful job applicants” (GradCareers Australia 2009).

Generally Australian organisations are less likely to mention the qualification; while it is implied, information about the job can be viewed in terms of the critical additional skills required. An international law firm advertising for Project Lawyers for both their Melbourne and Beijing offices only notes “For positions in the Beijing office Mandarin language skills are essential ... We are recruiting with high standards and expect high performance. We believe that innovation and hard work should be directly compensated” (Chambers & Company International Lawyers 2007, p. 1).

Further potential sources of information about Chinese employers are expert Australian businesses that specialise in assisting other Australian businesses wishing to establish either an office in China or a business relationship with a Chinese organisation. China Crest and China Blueprint are two such

companies. The China Blueprint website offers training on the Chinese business environment. Implicitly the topics offered reflect the differences between the locations. “China Blueprint can provide informal presentations on the Chinese business environment, cultural nuances and negotiation strategies. Topics can include any of the following subjects:

- \*China business culture and etiquette;
- \*Business planning and financing your China project;
- \*Setting up and managing your new factory in China;
- \*Planning to move your Australian plant to China; and
- \*Learning to import from China and assess the risks” (China Blueprint Consultants 2008).

### 8.3 Summary

Data about employability skills in China has been collected from a variety of sources and where possible compared to data collected from graduating students and lecturers. The comparative data for personal characteristics presented some consistency across the three groups. For the general attribute questions, employers and lecturers responded similarly for 13/14 items; employers and graduating students differed on five items. For the workplace skills, with regards to new graduates, employers and lecturers agreed on all items but employers and graduating students differed on 5/23 items.

According to employer interviews, the content and methods of many tertiary education courses do not provide graduates with the social skills to undertake their jobs effectively; employers also suggested that graduating students may not have adequate social or creative skills for their future employment. Other comments implied that reform of curriculum and teaching methods have not occurred as quickly as changes resulting from implementation of a market-oriented economy.

The transition from employers passively accepting government assigned graduates to a needs-based hiring and competing for the most talented graduates has led to the development of Chinese style HRM practices. From an institutional theory perspective, the organisational cultures represented by the employer interviewees differently impact on their adopted HRM practices.

Some points of discussion have been introduced in this chapter. The following chapter more thoroughly discusses the ideas raised and links them to the themes of the literature review chapters namely: graduate attributes, human resource management theory, culture and communication, education and business drivers in China.

## Chapter Nine Discussion

### 9.0 Introduction

This chapter briefly summarises the literature review and methodology. It then discusses the results from the perspective of each group studied (graduating student, lecturer, employer) and in terms of the hypotheses. This is followed by a discussion about the relevance of mapping the findings against Australian graduate capabilities. Finally the link between the results and the theoretical perspectives presented in the literature review on human resource management, the structural legislative environment and cultural diversity are discussed.

The focus of this thesis is the employability in China of the Chinese graduate with an Australian degree. By determining what that Australian degree actually looked like, what skills were emphasised when taught in the Chinese context, resulted in data that reflected different employability skills to those focused on in Australia. It is argued that pedagogy and curriculum developed and delivered in one context will undergo change when delivered in another context and the modification which occurs is a form of internationalisation. Depending on one's definition, this may constitute internationalisation of the curriculum. The researcher's own philosophy is that it does. Internal and external forces (Cuthbert 2002) are influencing universities' approaches to internationalisation whether or not the internationalisation involves transnational education. Particularly when strategies for internationalisation do involve transnational education, then issues arise around cost, quality and standards; comparability is hard to determine especially if context is paramount. As graduate employment is a desired outcome both in China and Australia, and curriculum changes to enhance employability are best made by those closest to the employment environment, changes made by the local Chinese lecturers should reflect the local employability skills needed. The hypotheses investigated various perspectives and possibilities for the relationship between Chinese workplaces, employability skills and graduate attributes.

### 9.1 Literature review

The literature review presented in Chapters Two, Three and Four highlighted the desired confluence of government policy, human resource concepts, professional body standards and university policy as significant drivers of curriculum development in Australia. As a result, curriculum is considered the appropriate vehicle through which the development of pre-determined graduate skills is facilitated during a student's university experience.

In contrast, Chinese government documents, professional bodies and educational policies are more implicit drivers of curriculum development in China and even though the curriculum under review is Australian, it is being delivered in a Chinese context by Chinese-educated lecturers. The implicit and

explicit differences can be partly explained by communication styles that in Australia tend to be direct, whereas in China tend to be subtle and less direct. Alternatively some difference can be attributed to a stronger degree of confidence or at least commitment in Australia that curriculum should be driven by these external forces. Non-educational bodies as educational drivers in China might eventually carry the same influence as in Australia but historical legacies and the substantial organisational and social changes required for this to occur, even if desired, are considerable.

The explicit valuing within the Chinese curriculum of a western set of graduate attributes is not apparent from a search of Chinese literature or Chinese university websites. Unfounded assumptions regarding the universality of educational drivers and concepts raise the question of the appropriateness of western higher education goals in a non-western setting. Further understanding of the Chinese educational and business drivers could significantly assist the internationalising required to make a western qualification more advantageous in China. At a minimum, the value of an overseas qualification needs to be explicit, focus on particular skills and how they might be used in different employment environments and cultural contexts. Skills developed through acculturation or any outcomes of an international experience were barely mentioned by the research participants.

In China non-graded formative assessment, which could be appropriate to enhance employability skills, complicates the classification system and the entry into and awarding of higher degrees. Non-graded formative activities are considered low status and little valued in the employment environment. Due to staffing and assessment issues, some student achievements that employers want to know about are not formally documented. If assessment by written examination is to be effective, then it needs to assess what it purports to assess, which is seldom the practical intelligence skills required by employers. Moving from the use of exam driven, summative, assessment, at least in China, is many years away, even though it is acknowledged that the employability of a graduate involves more than academic intelligence. This rigidity does not help graduates promote their employability skills or, by inference, tertiary institutions with positive statistics regarding the employment status of their graduates as required by the government six months after graduating.

One of the contentions of this research is that in China the lecturers, graduating students and employers are quite unique agentic groups; in some instances the lack of communication between the groups has affected understanding that in turn has had a detrimental effect on one or more of the groups. The literature review provided an historic and socio-cultural context to this poor communication. However it mostly emphasised the advantages of greater synergy, often for pragmatic reasons such as needing more innovation in order to enhance business opportunities. This approach is supported by Li and Pak (2008, p. 16) who determined that China's "monolithic culture" and tendency towards hierarchies inhibit the factors that enable talented, creative people from

businesses, government, universities and end-users to work together to bring about significant innovation. The current study does not conclude that innovation has increased or will in the future. But there are indications that students are aware of needing this talent, which suggests that some students are aware of some employer and industry needs. The results indicate that this awareness is more likely to come from graduating students' own web-based investigations rather than from their lecturers or the curriculum. Indeed some graduating students are independently building their own lifeworlds.

## 9.2 Methodology

The research questions and considerations such as reliability and validity dictated the requirement for adaptive theory and a multi method approach to investigate themes; hence the results are perceptions and a snapshot of a moving target. In brief, a number of procedures were used to maximise content and construct validity. For the qualitative aspects of the research these were the review of the literature and interviews. For the quantitative these were the surveys tailored to each target group but which contained mostly common questions to allow for comparisons. Table 56 shows which target group responded to which question categories noted by a tick (✓) if same and NA if not asked.

**Table 49 Matrix showing relationship between questions and respondents**

	Graduating Students	Lecturers	Employers
Personal characteristics of New Graduates	✓	✓	✓
Importance of certain, general attributes	✓	✓	✓
Importance of certain workplace skills	✓	✓	✓
Importance of the curriculum in developing certain skills	✓	✓	NA
Frequency of teaching of certain skills	✓	✓	NA
Importance of certain behaviour and attitudes in graduates employed in last 2 years	NA	NA	✓
Human Resource Management questions (interviewees only)	NA	NA	✓

Surveys, questionnaires and interviews should –and in this study did - elicit beliefs, attitudes and self-reported experiences in relation to the research topic (Furnham 2005, p. 50). However there were issues of accuracy and both researcher and respondent bias. As Baron and Greenberg (1990) warned, there was limited control over where and how the survey was completed. In addition, designing a questionnaire that is objective, unbiased, comprehensible and produces the desired information requires much pre-testing; for the interviewers, training is essential to minimise bias in question delivery, rapport development, attentiveness to responses and response clarification and interpretation (Baron & Greenberg 1990 ). The interviews took place in China at times that could fit with the researcher's teaching schedule. They were not completed within a predetermined time frame as their purpose was to assist with understanding the data and the exploratory, ongoing process of adaptive

theory. In 2005 and 2006 interviews were undertaken generally as information gathering exercises and focused on terms and language, while in 2007 interviews were geared towards understanding management practices and in 2008 focused on industry relationships with universities.

Organising interviews and obtaining completed surveys was a major challenge for the researcher even with her experience of cold calling when employed by IBM (Australia) as a new graduate. An example was the initial attempt to solicit surveys which involved a mail-out to 376 accountants in Beijing. The researcher was unknown to these accountants and the introductory letter was in English. Consequently, not one reply was received. Teo, Zhu, Yu and Tang (2006, p. 5) also reported a poor response rate:

During October and November 2005, survey questionnaires were mailed to 320 IT organizations randomly chosen from the China Foreign Enterprise Directory 2005. By the end of November, 32 responses were received. Despite several rounds of reminders, no additional response was received. In January 2006, 40 e-mails were sent through the first author's personal network in the Chinese IT industry. Seven responses were received by the end of January, which added up to a total number of 39, representing a response rate of 10.8 percent.

These two experiences reinforce the need to spend time understanding cultural differences, to identify the right approach for the targeted cohort, to pilot it and to allow sufficient time for starting afresh.

Adaptive theory has facilitated examining the relationship between a number of theories, research and highly contextualized ongoing action. Following the advice of Bessant and Francis (2005), the strategic use of peer review and a disciplined approach to academic enquiry have helped maintain rigour and overcome any tendency for the researcher to misinterpret her findings. The methodology has exposed similarities and differences in stated perceptions between the lecturers, employers and graduating students and the data was reviewed in Chapters Seven and Eight. The discussion in this chapter is at a 'cohort' level.

### 9.3 Graduating Students

The research data presents the perspectives and uncontested aspirations of Chinese graduating students, aged 20 to 22 years. Data on gender was not collected but is known to be 50 per cent male and 50 per cent female based on international student enrolments at VU. No data was collected for any other student group. While some differences were noted between the Liaoning and the Melbourne-based Chinese students, the overall picture was that their responses were not significantly different. The implication is that the Melbourne experience as an exercise in acculturation might aid their English language development and personal growth, but little else. English language skills were

important to some employers but of greater importance was the graduates' connection with Chinese business practices. This may be different to what foreign employers in China would say, especially if English were the main medium for communication inside the business.

### 9.3.1 Personal characteristics

The personal characteristics identified by participants as most important were *cooperation* and *confidence*. *Cooperation* aligns with the notion of a collective society trying to achieve harmony and the ideals of a powerful political system; even within a dynamic economic environment, core values do not change if not sanctioned. *Confidence* requires further analysis. The employer interviewees indicated that 'quiet' [sic] confidence is important but extreme confidence that bubbles into overt enthusiasm is less well regarded because it shows lack of self control and discipline. Hence *enthusiasm* is less desirable and to accommodate the limited responses possible on the questionnaire, less desirable was perceived as less important but not unimportant.

Personal characteristics selected as important but less so were *happy*, *enthusiastic* and *risktaking*. *Happy* is a very personal state of mind and a collective society focuses less on the individual, so perhaps this characteristic is simply less relevant in the Chinese environment. *Risk taking* in China has not always had a positive outcome and can involve anti-collective behaviour; while the graduates did not express why, there was an understanding that *risk taking* can be dangerous. Indeed, undertaking a non-Chinese qualification could be deemed as demonstrating *risk taking*. The survey result of *confidence* being more important than *enthusiasm* is a good example of the nuanced perceptions that this researcher has uncovered, but is not able to fully explain.

Chinese students in Melbourne nominated *loyal* and *hardworking* significantly more frequently than the Chinese students in Liaoning which possibly indicates transition issues more than the curriculum which at this level of comparison, is in essence the same in both places. Just as travellers develop fervent national pride when in a foreign context, the Chinese students who are probably socialized to see *loyalty* as their patriotic duty, identified strongly with this attribute. *Hardworking* was reportedly due to the pressure to do well in Melbourne and the extra work that most non-native speakers of English considered was necessary to achieve their goals.

### 9.3.2 General attributes

Both sub-groups, that is, Chinese students in China and Chinese students in Melbourne, placed great importance on *relationships*, *morals* and *commitment to study*. These are everyday words in China that are heard and read in political, social and educational contexts. Statistically, the only significant difference is that Liaoning students perceived *being involved in community activities* as more important. One can only speculate about the response pattern but one student wrote "no time",



another wrote “language barriers”, another “not know where and how” which would all be deterrents. Perhaps Chinese students in Melbourne simply are less involved in community activities than they would be in China, because they have identified themselves as more *hardworking* and hence perceive community as less important at this point in time. While clearly requiring further research, this finding was supported by informal discussions with some of the surveyed students who offered the view that “less important” has become “something that is not part of my life in Melbourne”. However, this is not necessarily a positive outcome for the student. Literature from UK, USA and Australia (Kift 2008; Tinto 2009; Yorke 2006) on student engagement states that the more engaged and connected a student is to the community, and the university community in particular, the more likely they will engage with learning which in turn may lead to having a more positive learning experience. The ramifications of non-engagement may damage the university if students perceive it as a negative factor and vocalize it. This may impact on marketing, particularly the highly valuable “word of mouth” marketing of students’ experiences.

The latest Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) compares international and domestic students’ engagement with learning and largely rejects the above findings. It indicates a pragmatic focus built on values such as relationships, morals and commitment:

International students have somewhat higher scores for engagement with active types of learning ... than their domestic counterparts ... international students are less likely to report ‘never’ participating in most types of active learning activities than domestic students. International students also report that they work with others during and outside of class more frequently than domestic students, and also make presentations, participate in community-based projects and tutor other students more frequently than domestic students. Domestic students on the other hand are a little more likely to ask questions or contribute to discussions in class and discuss ideas from their classes with others outside of class (Australian Council for Educational Research 2010, p. 20).

The report’s further assertion that: “International students interact with staff much more frequently than domestic students” (ACER 2010, p. 24) could be misleading. On one hand the interaction demonstrates commitment but the AUSSE data combines all cultural and national groups in its definition of “international”, and the term staff is ambiguous. International students interact with many university staff depending on their needs, including housing, counselling and financial staff. On the other hand, academically it is known that Chinese students are more likely to seek out their tutors in preference to their lecturers in Australia (Szabo & Deng 2009). Further investigation into determinants of acculturation, particularly their impact on neo-Confucian traits, is required.

### 9.3.3 Workplace skills

The Liaoning student sample rated *Using the computer for office tasks* and *Writing reports* as significantly more important than Melbourne students. Interestingly AUSSE found “international students are more likely to report that their experience has contributed to their acquisition of computing skills, and to their ability to speak clearly and effectively” (ACER 2010, p. 37). A little surprising was the finding: “International students more frequently keep their resumes up-to-date, explore where to seek jobs, network for job opportunities and set career development goals and plans than domestic students” (ACER 2010, p. 41). On reflection this may be the result of international students’ frustration with finding part-time employment and a stronger determination to do so.

### 9.3.4 Workplace skills within the teaching and learning context

For 12 of the 23 questions about workplace skills, over 80 per cent of graduates rated their perception of the attribute as “quite” or “highly important”. The interesting point is that when these skills and their percentages are compared with what students rate as “quite” or “highly important” skills in the curriculum, all but two decrease in their percentage rating. However *use of computer* is again significantly important to the Liaoning students who perhaps realized how important semester assignments and independent research are in the VU course - which require a multitude of computer skills whereas many Chinese courses have only a handwritten final examination. Or, did the label of workplace skills bias the graduating students’ responses by establishing a difference in the students’ minds between workplace and curriculum? In other words, the label carried with it a context and set one context up in opposition to the other which could infer that the opposite response was wanted. Nevertheless, AUSSE found similarities between domestic and International students for “overall general learning outcomes, but while there are no real differences between these groups of students, international students are less positive than domestic students about the extent to which their experience at university has contributed to their development of work-related or job-related knowledge and skills” (ACER 2010, p. 37). The difference between workplace and curriculum responses suggests that Chinese students regard the skills of their qualification as different to their employability skills, and having a role that is not limited to employment. While the degree will enable them to be employed, there is only limited relevance to the workplace.

When the focus of teaching as a frequency is added to the picture, the percentages are still high, although all but one (*work without supervision*) has decreased and *communicate in English and Chinese* and *follow directions without question* occur significantly more frequently according to the Liaoning students. Keeping in mind that the response options were different scales, it can still be suggested that if degree of importance and frequency of focus receive different responses, then there

is a mediating factor. In this instance a possible explanation is that lecturers and students do not agree on their importance ratings. This was investigated by reviewing the lecturers' data.

The pattern of the lecturers' data is inconsistent. This is not surprising as there will always be a complex interplay between curriculum, personality, ability and context. Lecturers may be socialised and educated similarly and hence have similar ideas about certain workplace skills. But when these are transferred to importance within the curriculum then other subject-related and ability factors are involved in their responses. Moreover, as the surveyed lecturers did not all teach the same subjects, the impact of these factors is unknown. As indicated in the last column of Table 76, focus of teaching is an individual response relating to the immediate domain of one's own classroom and the often unpredictable behaviours therein. In any context a lecturer's teaching focus and frequency reflects a mixture of personal characteristics, teaching philosophy and ability, and knowledge.

The survey and interviews were presented to the graduating students as neutral, perception finding exercises that might inform educational practices. There was no mention by the researcher or respondents that there was an issue of quality. Data analysis highlighted a gap between curriculum and actual teaching focus. Some ways of addressing this gap are through managing graduating student expectations, professional development for staff and improved curriculum documents.

## 9.4 Lecturers

Background and demographic responses of lecturers provided a sense of the range of subjects being taught, the teaching experiences, qualification levels and future plans. Data on gender was not collected in order to ensure anonymity. The rationale to the question about qualifications is that the degree system was only implemented in China in 1981 after the Cultural Revolution. Prior to this graduates received a certificate and a diploma, a general term covering all classifications (State Education Commission 1989) and still commonly used. The emphasis now is on gaining higher qualifications but the new Chinese lecturers continue to be selected from the top graduates at a Bachelor level and no workplace or teaching experience is required. With regards to future requirements, responses to the question about further courses and professional development reflect central government objectives for faculty development that include self-study, institutional needs and training combining theory with practice (Cao 1998, p. 45). Cao adds that training is increasingly focused on young staff.

Of note, the lecturer survey responses support interviewee responses that the "younger" teachers are "put onto the non-Chinese" courses. What is unknown is whether the teachers have a choice, whether this is done because the non-Chinese courses are popular or unpopular, whether these are temporary,

permanent or developmental positions, and whether younger teachers produce courses that are taught enthusiastically but perhaps less skilfully.

Sample bias within the partner lecturer group is not overtly present. Whilst VU conducts induction programs this has not been completed by all partner teaching staff and the annual teaching and learning conference in China is not attended by all partner teaching staff. Over time philosophies and approaches may synchronise between Chinese and Australian teaching counterparts however this should not be a requirement of TNE; understanding our diversity should be.

#### 9.4.1 Personal characteristics

The teaching in a VU program in China has no apparent effect on what one perceives as important personal characteristics for graduating Chinese students. The responses of lecturers from a range of backgrounds showed a high degree of uniformity. Being *cooperative*, *hardworking* and *confident* is key; being a *risk taker*, *happy*, *assertive* and *mature* is less important. Moreover, these characteristics were perceived by the majority of lecturers as more important than the technical skills which some interviewees mentioned as being “out of date” in the curriculum. Whilst interviewees thought the curriculum could be modified to develop the “teachable” characteristics, they also raised a number of objections including that it currently serves a broader function to simply that of meeting employer needs.

The lecturers and students both identified *cooperative* and *confidence* as important and *happy* and *risk taking* as less so.

#### 9.4.2 General attributes

While some different response patterns were noted between the two groups of lecturers, there was no attribute for which the difference was statistically significant, suggesting consistent and entrenched perceptions about the importance of such attributes. All the teachers have been socialised within an education system and community which has clearly expressed behavioural and social ideas. These have become ingrained and even if, on a day-to-day or individual basis, they are overturned, when asked to respond in a fairly general way, the social “norm” is usually the preferred or the most immediate and safest answer (Goffman 1974). It raises two points. Firstly, these attributes are essentially stable, regardless of any external, international influence and secondly, they are Chinese attributes.

What the uniformity means is that the data from the two groups of lecturers can be combined and viewed as one dataset. The outcome: *Valuing relationships* and *showing commitment* both showed a

similar response pattern and a high degree of importance by both groups of lecturers. This pattern of response and emphasis is also the same as that of the graduating student groups.

### 9.4.3 Workplace skills

The two groups of lecturers showed some variation in their responses to this group of skills. Non-partners rated higher at a statistically significant level ( $p < 0.05$ ) the perceived importance of *problem solving* and *making decisions*; partner teaching staff rated the importance of *following directions without question* significantly higher.

The clustering at the important end of the scale for non-partner teachers and in the middle of the scale for partner teachers for *able to solve problems in the workplace* was similar to the response pattern for *able to make decisions in the workplace* but less so with the pattern of responses for *able to follow directions without question*. For this statement non-partner responses clustered around the less important end of the scale and partner responses at the more important end of the scale. The wording of this skill statement made interpretation uncertain as responses at either end of the scale could be rationalised: one end could imply independence, the other end an understanding of the need for clarity. That the researcher might have been questioning “obedience” was not an interpretation expressed by interviewees.

### 9.4.4 Workplace skills within the teaching and learning context

The two groups of lecturers differed in their responses on the importance of three skills, from the perspective of what the curriculum focus should be. These were: *communicate in Chinese and English*, *follow directions without question* and *build relationships*. Partner lecturers perceived all three as statistically more important. Given that the VU course is examined in English and the Chinese course in Chinese, the partner lecturers stressed the importance of the curriculum allowing English and Chinese language skill development. As noted in the previous section, the item *follow directions without question* was not well explored in any of the interviews. Potentially there was confusion in the item and hence in responding to it. The item could have been answered on the basis that *following directions without question* occurred because students should not ask questions (which is often the case in traditional teaching) or that students should work independently to find their own answers (which is the approach taken by the VU teaching staff).

The response of partner lecturers to the relationship item was investigated in interviews. The partners were very aware of cross cultural differences and that genuine attempts at ongoing communication were essential to develop trust and build relationships. They did not explicitly connect the idea of relationships with *guanxi* but talked about understanding each other’s ways of doing things. Non-

partners seemed to be in less dynamic, less confused, less relationship-related teaching contexts; or, *building relationships* was perhaps standard behaviour that simply did not need emphasizing.

In relation to teaching focus, the two teacher groups provided significantly different responses for the same three skills, just as they did when thinking of the curriculum. These were: *communicating in Chinese and English*, *following directions without question* and *building relationships*. Moreover, similar response patterns to these skills were exhibited. In other words, where the two groups of teachers differed concerning importance ratings of skill development within the curriculum, they also differed with regard to their frequency of encouraging that same skill development. Thus there was a link between ratings: a skill that was highly important in the curriculum was always encouraged within teaching.

The current study did not set out to survey or interview teachers in Australia and the AUSSE results do not identify skills, but they do highlight the importance teachers place on linking workplace skills to curriculum and teaching:

most staff believe that it is important for students to improve their knowledge and skills that will contribute to their future employability through their university studies. Most students report having improved skills and knowledge that will contribute to their employability at least sometimes ... 72.4 per cent of students felt that their experience at university had helped them gain work- and job-related knowledge and skills. A great proportion of staff – 83.3 per cent – felt that their teaching had contributed at least ‘quite a bit’ to students’ development of these skills and knowledge. And while almost all staff felt it was important or very important that their students develop their communication skills, only 58.6 per cent of students felt they had done this ‘often’ or ‘very often’, and ... over a fifth of students reported ‘never’ giving a presentation in class or online (ACER 2010, pp. 31-32).

## 9.5 Employers

Background questions focused on ownership classifications which are often used in transitional countries such as China as a useful tool to explain internal and external business management and strategies (Zhang & Keh 2009). For Zhang and Keh (2009) three differences separate the three basic ownership models (SOEs, POEs and FIEs): resources which determine bargaining power, management structure which impacts on authority and agency, and organisational behaviours.

Different types of ownership structure represented by interviewees included state-owned, collective, private and joint ventures. The industries included consultancy firms, information technology, legal, consumer products, private educational and banking and financial services. Many interviewees stated

it was the first time they had been formally asked questions about curriculum and the workplace. They needed clarification before responding to questions regarding business size in employee numbers, as all Chinese are assigned to a work unit (*danwei*) and some regarded its size as the same measurement as the business size. In fact, an organisation may be comprised of a number of work units. The question was also unclear about whether to only count the Chinese arm of operations if it was an international business. Clearly, the question regarding number of employees could have been more precisely worded, although it would have added to length of survey and interview time, which were also considerations.

The form of ownership has a major impact on business goals, HRM and thus employment practices. All employer respondents in this thesis had some awareness of the concept of professional development, but only one linked professional development to career planning. In China, SOEs are still the most common type of organisation, even though their relative importance in the economy has diminished (Zhu 2005). According to Su, Xu and Phan (2008), SOEs have multiple social goals that do not emphasise operational profit or investment returns: “For example, a major objective of the Communist government since 1989 has been to maintain ‘societal stability’ by maintaining social equity, ensuring full employment and refraining from taking such profit enhancing measures as asset divestiture and job cuts” (Holz 2007 cited in Su 2008, p. 19). These goals can be achieved because “where the State has dominant control, the managers ... representing the State are likely to have a common social identity (and interests) because they are appointed from the same political and Party bureaucracy ... the effect of ownership concentration is to entrench the State’s – and by extension, management’s – interests” (Su 2008, p. 23). Inherited practices of the planned socialist economy are more deeply embedded in the traditional institutional environment of SOEs compared with the more market oriented HRM practices of FIEs. This is manifested in the role, resourcing, functions and existence of a separate HR department in FIEs and in the language and terminology noted on their respective websites. The diversity of responses in this study supports Chow’s (2004, p. 629) assertion that, “The level of human resource management sophistication varies across joint ventures, collectives and state-owned enterprises. In general, small collective-owned enterprises (COEs) and private-owned enterprises (POEs) often have fewer formal HR practices at the set-up stage of their business. However, the successful ones have better HRM systems in place”.

The major external constraints reported by private businesses have centred mostly around weak market demand, domestic competition, frequent changes in policy, high fees, restrictions to market entry, distribution channels and least of all, foreign competition (Garnaut & Song 2004, p. 8). The major internal constraints were predominantly access to finance, managerial talents, advanced technology, market information and to a small extent skilled labour (Garnaut & Song 2004, p. 8) and the legacy of government structures on internal business incentives (Dougherty & McGuckin 2008).

The impact of these supports Layder's argument of using a perspective that combines structure and agency and structural practices affected the responses made in the current study. At the same time, if 'subordinates' in the following quote means new employees / graduating students then it was not true in this study that "line managers' perceptions of the qualification requirements of jobs are on average not substantially different from the perceptions of their subordinates" (Felstead et al. 2002, pp. 30-31).

Understanding the non-State sector is important for this research because that sector is a significant employer of the graduates who are the focus of this research. In 2004 this sector, minus collective enterprises, accounted for about 50 per cent of total economic activity (Garnaut & Song 2004, p. 1). It has grown despite a regulatory environment favouring state-owned enterprises; it "emerged spontaneously in China as a result of entrepreneurship rather than official design" (Garnaut and Song, 2004, p. 29). Privatization of state-owned enterprises has occurred slowly; and even though the restructuring of the SOEs has caused massive unemployment, the government especially at the local level has encouraged social and organisational support. The private economy has been important for:

- increasing employment both by recruiting new workers into the non-farm economy and by absorbing laid-off workers from reformed SOEs;
- creating competition, nurturing entrepreneurship and instigating innovation;
- helping to channel investment into more efficient uses and hence raising the overall efficiency of the economy;
- helping to make the regulatory and institutional framework more compatible with a market system that meets the demands of the private sector, and thereby encouraging better performance from state-owned and collective enterprises; and
- accelerating growth with less risk to macroeconomic stability than occurs through the expansion of state-owned enterprises, since private firms are subject to a hard budget constraint (Garnaut & Song 2004, p. 2).

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) businesses, as an example of a non-State business sector, often have superior technology and advanced managerial skills. On this basis it might be expected that they would employ a more educated labour force (Chen & Findlay 2004, p. 108). However, the data from the National Industrial Census in 1997 indicates that FDI and domestic businesses "mainly employ workers with low levels of education, but foreign firms do hire proportionately more tertiary-educated employees, especially in capital-intensive and technology-intensive industries" (Chen & Findlay 2004, p. 108). In 2004 foreign businesses were paying higher wages than domestic businesses, contributing to higher levels of education and skills in FDIs that "have set a standard for domestic firms to follow or imitate, thereby increasing competition between firms, and therefore productivity and efficiency. Foreign firms have therefore played a far more important role in China's economic



development than merely acting as a source for foreign capital” (Chen & Findlay 2004, p. 116). Geographically FDIs are unevenly distributed further reinforcing regional income disparities.

### 9.5.1 Personal characteristics

See Table 45 in Chapter Eight for the combined employer, student and lecturer responses to this question. From the perspective of economic growth required to build a knowledge-based economy, it was interesting that employers reported informality was a key aspect in the early stages of private enterprise development. When management was family based more value was placed on trust than contracts. This enabled private enterprises to respond to market opportunities and changing policies and regulations. However, for sustained growth, companies mentioned the need to be focused, develop management capacity, identify skills needed, and have transparent accounting systems.

### 9.5.2 General attributes

Responses to the items in this question were statistically compared across the other groups. The employers clearly perceive *commitment* as highly important and while generational differences are possible the graduating students and employers did not significantly differ. However, graduating students and lecturers differed, with lecturers rating *commitment* as significantly more important.

As further evidence of the existence of different priorities, one can examine the importance of *high marks*: lecturers rate *high marks* as significantly more important than both employers and students. The lecturers’ emphasis most likely indicates the internal education culture which rewards teacher efficacy, as determined by students’ marks, with promotion and bonuses.

Consistently the graduating students perceived *knowing about local customs and traditions*, *world politics* and the *customs of other places* as significantly more important than for both employers and lecturers. Perhaps the graduating students are choosing a program that allows them to develop an international perspective rather than a solely Chinese view. Certainly any older teachers in the program were probably schooled in the former educational paradigm which was almost exclusively China-centric. Even though employers were from a variety of local and multinational organisations, they had similar perceptions across these dimensions as lecturers. For the employer group it is possible that there are higher or more immediate priorities such as cost, which in this instance overrides cultural knowledge. While many Chinese students expressed curiosity about other places, interview responses indicated that they used websites to explore and seldom read newspapers. The focus of the VU curriculum emphasises the importance of the social contextual factors and some assessment tasks require the social context to be considered, but it is possible to do this cursorily.

One question from this analysis is whether new graduates think that particular general attributes skills are so important that they promote them in their employment rather than concentrate on or reinforce those skills which employers or both they and employers regard as important? If graduates are promoting skills which employers do not value, then dissatisfaction can arise for both parties. In interviews four employers said “young people are unemployable”. An oft repeated comment when discussing internships was that they prefer graduates with workplace experience and an understanding of the importance of the customer and business success. It was evident from the online employment agencies and job advertisements that workplace experience is valued.

### 9.5.3 Workplace skills within the teaching and learning context

For the new graduates, the 11 items which have some importance because no employer perceived them as “Not Important” (Not Important = 0 = raw data), and the 12 items which employers did perceive as “Not Important” indicate the extremes (raw data total included in table). It would be convenient if they fell into frequently used categories such as people or job focus, and while my attempt to categorise the skills with either focus as presented in Tables 57 and 58 is untested, the second table suggests that what is “not important” are the job focused items.

**Table 50** Categorising workplace skills that are never Not Important

9. 求职毕业生在工作中能够: New Graduates in the workplace should be able to:	不重要 Not important	People (P) or Job (J) focus
团队合作 work in teams	0.00	P
思维敏捷 think quickly	0.00	P, J
表达个人观点 argue for what they think is right	0.00	P
善于解决问题 solve problems	0.00	P, J
考虑他人意见 consider other people's points of view	0.00	P
尊重同事 respect their colleagues	0.00	P
区分工作重点 identify the most important tasks	0.00	J
具有独立创新的见解 come up with new ideas	0.00	P, J
按期完成工作任务 complete tasks within a deadline	0.00	J
收集相关工作信息 gather information	0.00	P, J
建立人际关系 build relationships	0.00	P

**Table 51** Categorising the workplace skills that are sometimes Not Important

9. 求职毕业生在工作中能够: New Graduates in the workplace should be able to:	不重要 Not important	People (P) or Job (J) focus
使用电脑处理一般性工作 use the computer for general	4.8	J

office tasks		
敢于做决定 make decisions	14.3	P, J
书写报告 write reports	4.8	J
应用所学知识 apply their knowledge	4.8	J
运用中、英文交流 communicate in Chinese and English	9.5	P
洞察和预见问题 notice problems and possibilities as they arise	4.8	P, J
联系不同学科体系 make links between different subjects	19.0	P, J
服从领导 follow directions without question	23.8	P, J
独立工作 work without supervision	9.5	P, J
激励他人 motivate others	9.5	P
承受压力 perform well under pressure	4.8	P
了解所从事工作的社会价值 see the value of their job outside the workplace	9.5	J

In comparing graduating students and lecturers there were seven items that students rated as significantly “more important” than lecturers and for three of these the students also rated them as “more important” than the employers. The implication is that some graduating students have unrealistic perceptions. One important misperception is graduating students rating *communicate in Chinese and English* more highly than employers. Interview responses from employers varied on this item: some regarded the skills as a specialist commodity that should be outsourced and paid for as required; others saw it as a necessary skill for all employees.

While new graduates thought they could *build relationships* significantly more so than employers, the latter rated *solving problems* and *identifying the most important tasks* more highly than new graduates. This gap in understanding could lead to lack of focus on certain skill development and presenting one particular skill, namely *problem solving*, as an acquired skill. *Problem solving* was one of the skills on which employers were asked to reflect in the context of graduates they had employed in the last two years; over 80 per cent rated it as “Quite” or “Highly Important”, effectively reinforcing its importance. *Problem solving* should be a skill that is quite apparent to the students, as it is included in course documents as a Graduate Capability. The nuances are important however; for just as *problem solving* is expected, *decision making* is not, according to Child and Pleister (2004) who found that the typical urban private business recruits university graduates, pays them well and expects them to stay, but they are not normally involved in decision making (p. 199). The gap in new graduate and employer understanding could be an outcome of thinking style or cognitive style differences, meaning that if the employer and graduate are not schooled in the same disciplines their understanding of language and critical terms can be different; for some there cannot be problem solving without decision making.

Sofu (2006) used his Thinking Style Inventory (TSI) and Sternberg's Forms of Thinking Styles (1997) to assess thinking style preferences of Chinese and Australian public sector managers. He concluded "Different education systems and courses encourage discipline-based styles of thinking" which continues as professional thinking (Sofu 2006, p. 11) and added:

lectures promote executive and hierarchical thinking styles while cooperative learning encourages exploring, external and social thinking styles. Where students' thinking styles mismatch their teachers' styles or employees' styles mismatch their bosses' styles, there may be failure to learn effectively and failure to communicate and perform effectively. For example some managers do not wish for employees to ask questions or to challenge their point of view; so where employees have a strong preference for independent and exploratory thinking style they are a mismatch with the organizational culture established by the manager and would experience difficulty achieving required outcomes efficiently.

The importance of relationships has been frequently mentioned, but the role of *guanxi* is not straightforward. Zhang and Keh (2009, p. 142) propose that "With the progress of market transition, the relative importance of *guanxi* in interorganizational exchanges will decline, or *guanxi* will shift from being primary in some organizations to complementary in all organizations". After some investigation they determined that further qualitative and quantitative research was required even though the literature supported the proposition.

## 9.6 Answering the hypotheses

1. If Chinese employers, reflecting Chinese culture in general, value the traditional curriculum, then Chinese graduates of a western curriculum will not meet Chinese employer requirements unless they display appropriate Chinese employability skills.

This was found to be true. A number of Chinese employability skills were identified by Chinese employers such as being *cooperative*, having *high morals*, *building relationships* and *showing commitment*. These skills have similarities with western graduate attributes such as interpersonal and networking skills but are in fact contextualised uniquely within Chinese workplaces. Specifically a skill such as *building relationships* has its own set of behaviours in China.

2. If Chinese employers see the limitations of a wholly traditional curriculum; that is, they want a partially western one, then there will be some skills that they perceive as important in the western curriculum.

Yes, Chinese employers do see the value of teamwork, communication skills and practical skills which are consistently developed in many western tertiary curricula such as the VU Bachelor of

Business. More should be done to inform Chinese employers about how these skills are developed and assessed which could contribute to less emphasis on examination outcomes.

3. If Chinese lecturers were teaching the curriculum with the skills required by the Chinese workplace in mind, then the perceptions of Chinese lecturers and Chinese employers regarding certain skills and qualities would be similar.

More similar than different perceptions were found. Often the lecturers' responses fell between the employer and graduating student responses. As with Australian employers, Chinese employers said that *high marks* were not so important.

4. If Australian universities have graduate attributes embedded in curricula that are not relevant in China, then Chinese lecturers and Chinese students will perceive these skills as less important.

Chinese lecturers and Chinese students perceived some skills as less important but were not usually in agreement with each other. The students consistently rated *knowing about local customs and traditions*, *world politics* and *customs of other places* as more important. For these attributes employers and lecturers were in closer agreement. The current cultural milieu in China is encouraging more global awareness and students are exploring some ideas independently.

5. If students completing the VU Bachelor of Business in China or in Melbourne aim to find work in China, then they will similarly value the same skills and qualities.

Yes, the Chinese students in both locations mostly rated the same curriculum and workplace skills and qualities similarly. This can be attributed to generally a relatively short stay in Australia which is too short for ideas to change significantly. More data addressing acculturation factors may have altered this conclusion however, universities that are promoting overseas study as a life changing experience need to ensure that the time spent studying abroad is adequately engaging and meaningful to justify this claim.

## **9.7 Alignment with graduate capabilities and employability skills**

In 2.1.1 due to a number of personal skills that Whitefield identified as not developed in the curriculum, I asked: "Why have these skills been purposely or accidentally left out? This research shows that the curriculum in China still follows a traditional exam focused pedagogy and for many reasons, not least of all fairness in marking, some personal skills which in part correspond to western graduate attributes, although desired by Chinese employers, are not a curriculum focus.

The skills required by the Graduate Capabilities were incorporated as survey items, but not the precise terms used by VU's Graduate Capabilities, in order to use phrases and ideas that were easily understandable to all respondents. Items such as *Making decisions* and *Gathering information* clearly align with the Graduate Capability statements and the fact that graduating students perceive them as occurring more frequently than lecturers, suggests that they are explicitly there. Unfortunately lecturers, significantly more than the students, perceive themselves as frequently focusing on *think quickly*, *apply knowledge* and *work unsupervised*. I say 'unfortunately' as these are skills that the Chinese lecturers noted as important for the success of the Chinese students undertaking the Australian course, yet the students do not perceive nor share the focus.

Table 59 below aligns graduating students' "most important" personal characteristics, "quite" and "highly important" rated general attributes and "quite" and "highly important" rated workplace skills with Victoria University's Graduate Capabilities. As the language of the Graduate Capabilities and the mapping activity are open to many interpretations, this alignment was determined by the researcher in consultation with the Graduate Capability policy makers at VU. Furthermore, as the policy states that the skills underlying some of the Graduate Capabilities overlap, some skills were linked to more than one Capability. Some degree of alignment exists for five of VU's six Graduate Capabilities; "manage learning and career development opportunities" is not aligned with any of the "most important" personal characteristics, "quite" and "highly important" general attributes and "quite" and "highly important" workplace skills.

**Table 52 Mapping of survey items with VU Graduate Capabilities**

In addition to their technical and field of study-specific knowledge and skills, the VU graduate is able to:	"Quite" and "highly important" workplace skills, that achieved over 80% response rate by surveyed students, aligned to Grad Caps	Personal characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills that do not align with Grad Caps
Problem solve in a range of settings	Solve problems; Make decisions Apply their knowledge Come up with new ideas Complete tasks within a deadline Perform well under pressure	Confidence  Show commitment
Locate, critically evaluate, manage and use written, numerical and electronic information	Solve problems; Make decisions Apply their knowledge Come up with new ideas	
Communicate in a variety of contexts and modes	Work in teams; Consider other people's points of view Respect their colleagues Communicate in Chinese and English	
Work both autonomously and collaboratively	Work in teams; Consider other people's points of view Work without supervision Cooperation	
Work in an environmentally, socially and culturally	Respect their colleagues Build relationships.	

responsible manner	High morals	
Manage learning and career development opportunities		

One employer interviewed introduced *shixi*, to explain work practice. Literally, “Student practice”, *shixi*, especially the Marxist version of combining theory and practice to encourage a pedagogy of students being actively part of the learning process, is common. However, the reality is that student practice can range from observer, to nuisance, to unwanted expense, to valuable trainee or research assistant. Some Chinese universities have established cooperative agreements, often project based, so that student practice can be more meaningful.

The mention of *shixi* led to some discussion with several employers and lecturers about the advantages and disadvantages of, and differences between, Chinese and Australian work placement programs. In brief, Australia and specifically VU has a policy and explicit strategies for developing and integrating authentic work experiences and learning; the Learning in the Workplace and Community policy reinforces the relevance of the skills of the Graduate Capability policy. Billet (2008, p. 50) cited his own research when identifying the strengths of participation in daily work activities as: “(a) access to authentic work activities (i.e. authentic activities, novel and routine); (b) observation and listening – cues and clues (indirect guidance); (c) access to more experienced co-workers (direct guidance – development of heuristics) and (d) practice – opportunities to reinforce refine and hone” and the weaknesses:

(a) learning bad habits and dangerous or inappropriate shortcuts; (b) the lack of opportunity to practice or extend; (c) lack of support and guidance; (d) undertaking tasks but not understanding what or why (i.e. the failure to develop understanding); (e) experiences that constrained individuals’ learning because of a lack of support; and (f) experiences that were personally or professionally confronting and which inhibited the development of positive occupational identity (p. 51).

Interview respondents could see the positive and negative aspects; employers were more keen than lecturers to pursue the strategy.

Cullen (2008) provides evidence of the positive outcomes of Cooperative Education as a strategy that would enhance employability for Chinese graduates in the light of stated Chinese employer needs. Table 60 presents his descriptive statistics for the personal outcomes of a Cooperative Education program in Australia.

**Table 53 Personal outcomes of a Cooperative Education program in Australia**

<b>Survey Item</b>	<b>% Agree or Strongly Agree</b>
I gained practical knowledge about my chosen field of academic study	93
I had the opportunity to develop written communication skills	73
I had the opportunity to develop oral communication skills	89
I acquired new knowledge from my work	98
Personal growth was an outcome of the placement	93
Some of my work tasks challenged me mentally	81
Some of my work tasks challenged me physically	70
Some of my work tasks challenged me creatively	72
I developed problem solving skills during my Placement	82
I now feel more confident about seeking Employment	92
My job seeking skills have been improved	88

(Source: Cullen 2008, p. 130)

*New knowledge, practical knowledge, personal growth and confidence* all rated highly and, except for confidence whose nuances have already been discussed, are all perceived as valuable qualities and skills in new graduates by Chinese employers.

The term ‘graduate attributes’ is still uncommon in China. There are qualities and skills Chinese lecturers regard as important and might be modelled explicitly for students. But given the high status of curriculum documents and the public face of relationships, it is more likely that they are implied. The subtlety of any embedding of Chinese graduate attributes in teaching and learning opportunities therefore “may not be aligned with what the students both experience and perceive in terms of their development of graduate attributes” (Bath et al. 2004, p. 325). In other words, a gap continues to exist between lecturers, students and employers in China not so much for “why” graduate attributes are important but for “what” graduate attributes are and “how” should they be acquired.

As found in my research, Chinese employers are not overly interested in education promoting worldly knowledge and the Chinese employers, lecturers and graduating students have slightly different expectations of undergraduate programs. The interviews with employers in this study suggest a similar position to findings of Birmingham City University on behalf of the UK Centre for Research into Quality. The Birmingham research concluded that a degree course develops some personal and workplace skills, but without a workplace component, it takes too long for new graduates to be effective as they are unfamiliar with the nature and culture of work. Furthermore,

Many small and medium-sized organisations want new recruits to be effective from the outset. A significant number of larger organisations are moving away from a general, leisurely, ‘fast-track’ introductory training to more job-specific recruitment requiring more rapid effectiveness. Some future projections suggest that all firms, large and small, are likely to expect graduates to be immediately effective. The implication of this is that higher



education programmes will need to better prepare graduates for workplace culture (Birmingham City University n.d.).

This highlights the distance between educational outcomes and business needs and hence the change required if the curriculum is to genuinely develop practical skills. It also hints at a tension between having enough technical knowledge to be immediately effective and the appropriate general attributes and workplace skills. At the same time, the UK research showed that employers, students and educators expected undergraduate education to be broader than vocational education, in order to produce critical, analytical, reflective, transformative graduates.

From different traditional bases, the argument for taking greater risks with recruitment is also applicable in China:

Far too much recruitment procedure is guided by prejudice, preconceptions and bureaucratic pragmatism, directed towards reproduction of the prevailing culture. It is predominantly ‘safe’ and oriented towards adding value rather than ‘risky’ aiming at recruitment of transformative employees. This is a particular problem for large employers but also evident amongst small employers. The response to the increasing numbers of graduates is not to consider the wider range of potential transformative agents, but to narrow down the choice on the basis of spurious criteria such as A-level grades, degree-classification, or reputation of higher education institution. Placements provide a useful and more appropriate recruitment process for organisations who provide work-based experiences for undergraduates (Birmingham City University n.d.).

Other research supports these ideas. Luo’s (2006) research comparing the corporate cultures of two computer manufacturing companies (Dell and Lenovo) in China reflects Ungar and Chan’s (2004) findings that the people skills needed for long-enduring relationships and loyalty are rewarded more than English speaking skills. Furthermore, Luo claims that Lenovo’s corporate culture is regarded as a family culture and it was the chairman’s deep sense of loyalty that had him promoted to the top job rather than his achievements. Luo (2006, p. 23) asserts that “in most Chinese companies, achievement have never been regarded as the most important factor to maintain one’s power and position” and explains that:

In recruiting new talents, Lenovo differs from foreign-funded enterprises in that it stresses the employees’ sense of belonging and responsibility. Most foreign-funded enterprises emphasize the importance of business competence alone, but Lenovo requires more than that. It hopes its staff, through hard work and a positive attitude, feel that they have become their own masters... (Luo 2006, p. 23).

Some of the above comparisons are part of the war of words between two aggressive companies and further insight was gained from an interview which snowballed from the planned interviews. An interview with the head of the IT division of BASF said that in the company's China division there was little loyalty to the company from employees in lower management and it was hard to find a Chinese person with the necessary creative thinking and problem solving skills for middle management. Furthermore, he believed that companies with national roots preferred to employ people with similar national roots and that Chinese graduates would look for employment in Chinese companies before looking for work further afield. He reported that BASF did not set out to discriminate between graduates from different locations, but Chinese graduates who had studied overseas were more likely to have the skills the company needed, and German business degree graduates were the best fit.

In China some employers require graduates with both English skills and professional business knowledge (Liu 1998, p. 133), and the data in my research suggests that students realise the importance of English skills, but less so soft skills. To increase the competitive edge of VU Chinese graduates in the job market, language and learning teaching units have combined with semi-applied disciplines such as economics and trade, to develop new, more utilitarian courses with additional focus on soft skills.

This thesis argues that the disjunction of attribute evaluation coupled with Chinese newspaper reports about Chinese university graduates not being able to find jobs, may be minimised if:

- Curriculum were more aligned with business needs;
- Graduate attributes were more explicit and relevant to graduates and employers;
- Graduating students were better informed about the importance of certain job candidate attributes;
- Graduating students had more realistic job expectations;
- Employment was not determined by an interviewer's subjective assessment (which Teese and Polesl (2003) often linked to identity issues and a preferred cultural affinity); and
- The interview process was more open and revealing.

Finally, where professional alliances are not strong the graduate attributes promoted by some western universities could be developed within the context of Chinese employability skills to assist new graduates to meet the needs of Chinese workplaces.

## 9.8 Analysing the data from a HRM theory perspective

It is concluded from the interviews that organisational traditions, legacies and size differentiate the cultures and hence graduate skills valued, equally if not more than the legislative system which should be applied uniformly. This finding reflects Chow (2004 p. 638) who cites Di Maggio and Powell's (1983) assertion that: "Organizations are embedded in institutional environments that influence the practices and policies they adopt". In China, whether or not graduates have the required job skills, they need to observe government regulations; for example, new graduates need to obtain certain permissions to change their official place of residence, according to the Chinese human resources service provider, FESCO (n.d.). Again, structure and agency are intertwined.

CEOs surveyed by Child and Pleister (2004, p. 205) identified technical training, accounting and marketing as the three key areas of training required, which could explain why accounting is such a popular specialization among business undergraduates. They found that it can be difficult for small private businesses to compete for the talent required because graduates prefer foreign companies, joint ventures or government institutions. This was a commonly expressed preference by graduates in the current study. Interviewees in this study implied that professional development was costly if it upskilled employees making them more employable to a competitor, rather than an approach to retaining employees and keeping up with the competition. Graduating students who mentioned starting their own business valued entrepreneurial skills but only referred to the need for 'managerial' skills if the business grew larger and more complex; and only if prompted did they see a link between graduate capabilities and managerial skills.

Employment in the private sector in China has increased rapidly and even though job security and welfare benefits may be low, the rate of return for each level of education was high (Meng cited in Garnaut & Song 2004, p. 152), and for the urban private sector there were better incentives and more flexibility. It was concluded that political affiliation had no impact on earnings in the private sector but did in the state and collective sectors. While labour market reform has ideological implications, efficient private businesses stimulate competition and allow employment options. The state sector still attracts highly educated individuals, but more and more highly skilled young workers are choosing the private sector. Perhaps these are the dynamic, risk taking, unattached graduates of this research.

The psychology of behaviour in the Chinese workplace is one possible avenue for future examination. While it is not central to the current research questions, longitudinal studies of the psychology of behaviour at work would benefit from the findings of this thesis.

Personality traits have been shown to play a strong role in determining work related behaviour and hence job performance (Hogan & Holland 2003). However it is not known which individual factors are important or how they relate to work behaviour. One possible research model for exploring the relationship connects five factors - ability, demographic factors, intelligence, motivation and personality - to occupational behaviour (Furnham 1992, 2001). The value of Furnham's model is that while the present study stops at a point just after selection, and broadly uses the five factors, Furnham regards these factors as having an ongoing, predictive effect on occupational behaviour. Hence the current study is justified in using these factors in its diagnosis of what is important at the early stage of graduate employment.

Furnham (2005, p. 219) argued that personality variables interact with other variables such as "individual difference variables (e.g. abilities, beliefs, traits and values); situational variables (eg. corporate culture, group norms, physical context); and work outcome or task-related variables (e.g. productivity, satisfaction, supervisor ratings, absenteeism)". These three categories include some of the current study's personal characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills and address what Furnham (2005) regarded was needed, an investigation of the three-way interaction.

One approach to the analysis of personality and jobs is the concept of 'fit', but there are many, dynamic variations. Repeatedly my thesis and Sofo's (2006) comparison of thinking style preferences suggest that 'fit' is contextually and culturally determined. Furnham (2005, p. 168) notes a "person-environment, person-job and person-organisation fit as well as supervisor-subordinate goal and personality fit". Supporting the importance of structure and particularly agency, there is objective fit and subjective fit; a fit of people's interests/preferences and job rewards and an availability fit; there is a general vocational fit and a more specific abilities fit (Furnham 2005). There are also theories of reasoned action and planned behaviour which attempt to describe a predictive link between attitudes and behaviour. By themselves, attitudes are not good predictors of behaviour at work; one also "needs to consider, and measure, subjective norms or beliefs about how others in the organization behave; personal beliefs about self-efficacy; the extent to which the individual believes he or she has personal control over the behaviour as well as their history of this specific behaviour" (Furnham 2005 pp. 238-239). Furthermore, the prediction needs to consider complex intrinsic and extrinsic motivational issues and individual and group beliefs of the purpose and role of work which dictate: "how employees select their potential employer, how they behave at interview, how quickly they adapt to and are socialized by the organization, their job satisfaction and productivity, their job history or promotion, and why and when they leave the organization" (Furnham 2005, p. 269), plus various management behaviours. These theories are possible directions for extending my research.

Westwood (1992 cited in Furnham 2005, p. 348) concludes that the Western view of personhood and personality as an individual, independent entity contrasts with the Asian relational, social view for which “satisfaction of basic needs depends on being able to bring behaviour into line with social norms and expectations. The force to act is dependent upon the presence of socially sanctioned outcomes and of social recognition for having behaved in a socially acceptable fashion”.

Consequently, traditionally behaviours were promoted that protect “face”, create a good impression, maintain social harmony and achieve social acceptance. By giving and receiving “face” people can avoid public punishment, embarrassment, conflict, rejection, ridicule and retaliation (Yang 1981, p. 161). The current research indicates that young Chinese value and perceive “face” in a similar way.

In China, “the preference for kin in key positions is based on the belief that they are more trustworthy, committed and loyal” (Furnham 2005, p. 168). Kin are the innermost circle; this is not *guanxi*; rather it is creating a stable familial cohesive framework for effective business operations because it promotes a “closer adherence to group norms” (Furnham 2005, p. 168). From information on the Chinese websites, job specifications and duties are less clearly defined, and Furnham suggests “The lesser degree of specialization and standardization certainly encourages flexibility but may encourage conflict. Inevitably, role ambiguity is more common in Eastern than Western workgroups” (2005, p. 168). To a certain extent this helps explain the imprecise job descriptions common in China. From the employer interviews, email is less important than oral communication. Interviewees made remarks that suggest team building for effective group collaboration is not undertaken as much as activities which simply build loyalty. Furnham’s explanation is that time is allocated more to “socio-emotional activities (such as shared lunch) than Westerners ... it is very important for all individuals to get along with each other, group solidarity is a goal in and of itself ... more important to share in more socio-emotional than task-orientated activities” (2005, p. 168). Interviewees mentioned tourist excursions organized by their business for this very purpose.

Another theoretical consideration in reviewing the results is to determine whether a link exists between more sophisticated “soft skilled” graduates and higher levels of task control for new graduate employees (Felstead et al. 2002). The discretion and more complex work provide flexibility and can be highly motivating but require judgment by the employee and supervisor. For the supervisor it means decreased control, for the graduate employee it requires confident problem solving and decision making skills. Felstead et al. (2002, p. 67) explain that the connection has grown recently with the idea common among management commentators that many ordinary workers may be (and should be) more ‘empowered’, as their skills and responsibilities are broadened. In fact, a decline in the proportion of professionals who believe they can exercise control and choice in their jobs has been reported (Felstead et al. 2002). Such detailed research has not been carried out on Chinese data.

While Chinese employers noted gaps in graduate skills they also noted that other skills had increased. However any question of empowering new graduate employees is again linked to the complexity of the structure and agency debate in China.

## 9.9 Policy and practice

China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) has aligned it more with the global economy and accelerated the potential for privatisation and decentralisation (Dougherty & McGuckin 2008). However So (2004, pp. 222-223) maintains that development is limited by unreformed state infrastructure:

Even though there is no longer an ideological bias against private ownership, an unfair taxation system, inadequate and weak financial and fiscal institutions, the lack of government transparency, an uncertain legal enforcement ... are all impeding the development of the private sector. Private firms still face discrimination from the state, particularly in their ability to access bank finance. Although the state has withdrawn from the direct management of enterprise operations, it has not yet negotiated a relationship with private business to reduce conflicts, maintain a fair competitive and business environment, or create a balance between state regulations and marketisation.

The new Labor Contract Law introduced on 1 January 2008 greatly strengthens the rights of employees in China. The interviewees were all aware of new recruitment and selection processes, even if they had not observed or experienced them. The legal and procedural changes include: Labor contracts now need to be in writing; there is a limit to the number of serial short term contracts; policies and procedures for such actions as terminating an employee and position descriptions need to be explicitly documented; "procedures for recruiting suitable staff are similar to those in the West ... with Chinese characteristics" (echinacities 2008, p. 1); employee representation is permitted; and all companies in China are responsible for paying employee taxes and social welfare (Baker & McKenzie 2007).

The importance of the new Labor Contract Law was reinforced by Wen Jiaobao's *Report of the Work of the Government 2008*, in which he stated:

We will strictly enforce the Employment Promotion Law and the Labor Contract Law. We will continue to follow a vigorous employment policy, adhere to the principle of expanding employment by encouraging business start ups, strengthen job training and training in how to start a business, encourage people to find jobs on their own or start their own businesses, and support the establishment of small enterprises. We will speed up development of a human

resources market with uniform standards for both urban and rural areas, improve the public employment service system, and promote the creation of an employment system that treats urban and rural workers equally. We will strengthen job placement guidance and services for college graduates. We will deepen reform of the job-placement system for people leaving military service. We will improve the aid system for job seekers ... (Wen 2008, p. 1).

There is often a gap between central government policy and practice; a finding of the research here. Fang (2008) hinted at the ambiguity in the laws which allow some traditional practices such as relationship based contracting and unique interpretations at local government level. This will continue to drive some difference of opinion in any curriculum development initiatives and communication between employers, lecturers and graduating students.

### 9.10 Examining the data from a cultural diversity theory perspective

One large JOE/FDI interviewee described the difficulty of joining different organisational cultures: *“the way we talk and use email is different”*, *“it’s hard to state the cultural differences but they certainly affect how we work”* and *“our international structure encourages autonomy but now we have to do some things with other departments”* (JVO 5). House and Stank (2001, p. 16) argue that *“when two organizations come together in a partnership each brings a distinct cultural tradition and set of operating assumptions. Failure to recognize the differences and to be receptive to reviewing existing culturally driven assumptions generates conflict that is at best counterproductive”*. Both the interviewee and House and Stank thought the differences had been overcome through internal professional development.

Studies of Chinese business people in relation to conflict behaviour and aggression reveal a degree of avoidance for behaviours that result in a lack of harmony (Chiu 1989). In the employer survey, self control, self effacement and discipline come slightly to the fore. This suggests an acceptance of values that promote collective patterns of life, such as humility, patience, modesty and courtesy, that are grounded early on: *“cooperation is expected in order to attain social and functional goals”* (Matthews 2000, p. 122), and certainly strongly developed in Chinese university dormitory life. These same values are the basis of the Confucian ethos which rapid economic development, marketisation and industrialisation have led to be operationalised differently.

The success of some goals is arguable. One hope had been that modernisation in China could involve technology, behaviour and material progress while being kept separate from the values, thinking and traditions of Westernisation. One message was very clear from the employers in this research: an international perspective was acceptable but not if it meant a loss of *“Chinese-ness”*. On questioning, this meant loyalty to both Chinese ways and to Chinese people. The preference could be attributed to

Hofstede (1991) who suggested that Confucian Dynamism as a philosophy promotes a search for virtue rather than truth; a philosophical stance differentiating Western from Confucian education.

Liu, Friedman and Chi (2005, p. 243) are adamant that *harmony*, *face* and *Ren Qing* are strongly internalised social norms in China. The words were constantly used by the interviewees regardless of whether they were employer, lecturer or graduating student and appear to be strongly part of the interviewees' lived experience. Hence I agree with Zhang and Bond's (1998) and Liu et al.'s conclusion that although personality dimensions can be replicated in other cultures, they are Western models of personality that do not fully explain constructs important to Chinese people.

### 9.11 Internationalisation

In the current climate of educational and business internationalisation, the changes required should be more than simply accommodating the cultures involved and certainly not one culture dominating another. Kingston and Forland (2008, p. 8) assert that: "It is essential that this transition necessarily involves give and take by both parties—a view that has led to the idea of cultural synergy, in which both cultures are equally valued and grow and adjust together to successfully integrate and gain reciprocal benefits". This idea underpinned some of the data analysed in this research such as in the general preference for *cooperation* and *relationship building* but items that involved knowing about other cultures were favoured more by the graduating students.

Transnational Education and internationalised educational programs should be positive activities, whether for material or altruistic reasons and whether for vocational or broader educational outcomes; both highlight the diversity of and within the stakeholders. In the UK "internationalisation of HE seems to be gradually evolving, as international activity becomes an increasingly valuable asset to universities and the push for non-regulated fee income (unrelated to the government) increases" (Kingston & Forland 2008, p. 6). For Australia the TNE market in China is also a valuable source of income but it is subject to many external forces. Acting on findings concerning *cooperation* and *relationship building* could increase educational quality and bolster the income. Arrangements to align expectations amongst stakeholders (lecturers, students, parents, teaching and research partners, employers and government bodies) and to ensure that higher education involves active participation interculturally and internationally are essential to build best practice in understanding and giving employment opportunities for students across cultures.

### 9.12 Summary

In Australia and the UK producing graduates that meet labour market needs has been undertaken pragmatically. It continues to occur according to Yorke (2004) through the influence of professional



bodies, employer organizations, cross-institutional networking and government financial incentives. Higher education and employers communicate regularly and the knowledge generated contributes to curriculum design and content focusing on various aspects of graduate employability (Yorke 2004). In China, labour market needs were met, also pragmatically, by a centralized work allocation system. With that system now removed, and with neither the current Australia/UK nor the old Chinese system having fully met labour market needs, China is in a position to reconsider its educational drivers.

Unfortunately for the pragmatists, “Employability is not an attribute for which detailed criteria can be set up in advance and performances assessed against them ... the construct has many components which are expressed with varying amounts of fuzziness” (Knight & Yorke 2003, p. 165). It is not only the business ownership, structure or political environment that makes different people ‘employable’ but the different blends of characteristics, attributes and skills. Furthermore, the education system in China has a limited assessment regime, even more so than in Australia and the UK where: “the assessments typically used in higher education do not have the scope to cover all the dimensions of employability” (Knight & Yorke 2003, p. 165).

This chapter has concluded that university education and business drivers in China are only minimally informed by each other. While employers expressed more desire for communication between the sectors, graduating students were not adequately prepared for the world of work in China. The lecturers were open to curriculum change but saw barriers to its implementation.

The final chapter will revisit the aims of this thesis, the methodology, and the data analysis and conclude with some final suggestions for future research in this under-researched area.

## Chapter Ten Conclusion

### 10.0 Introduction

In Australia it has become increasingly important for universities to know the range of capabilities that support employability of graduates, and it is argued that the curriculum is used to develop and enhance some of those capabilities. It is posited that this is one direction that tertiary educational developments could take in China, particularly in regards to transnational education programs, which already contain within their curriculum the development of some capabilities, and may already possess some of the developmental potential desired by Chinese employers.

Recent Australian research (VU 2005; Henderson & Pearce (2011) indicates that the opportunity for substantial curricula renewal has been impeded by Australian educators' lack of awareness of Chinese social and cultural mores. This research also shows that structure, personal agency and historical issues are greater factors than linguistic misunderstanding from the Chinese perspective. This study comments on the nature of these factors, particularly between graduate attributes and employability skills in China, and how it contributes to less than fully satisfactory educational partnerships between China and Australia. Until recently, there has been only limited collaborative research and informed curriculum development. This study attempts to bridge this divide and develops a statement of inquiry that addresses the issues of inter-cultural dislocation which could be adapted and applied to other offshore learning and teaching relationships for VU and also for other universities operating internationally. In addition, the researcher has used this method to inform her own teaching and learning practices, the research method of this study and the analysis of the data collected.

### 10.1 Outline of the thesis

Chapter One presented the researcher's personal and professional perspectives, and her concern - from reports in the Chinese press - that Chinese employers were not getting Chinese graduates of Australian courses with the skills they required. In Chapter Two western educational concepts of graduate attributes, employability skills and internationalisation were illustrated. Subsequently it demonstrated a common group of desired graduate attributes but diverse implementations and realisations of them. Chapter Three then examined the Chinese educational system and the difficult interaction between traditional and modern drivers. Chapter Four presented a number of Chinese business models, their particular employment needs, HRM approaches and cultural influences. Chapter Five investigated several possible methodological and interpretative paradigms which would allow the flexibility to review and revisit data so that new theory could emerge. Consequently, Chapter Six examined the mixed method and its implementation for this comprehensive study which involved students, lecturers and employers. Chapter Seven presented current research of a

transnational partnership between one Australian university and one university in north-eastern China using data from offshore Chinese students and onshore Chinese students, and partner lecturers and non-partner lecturers. Chapter Eight analysed the employer data and compared it with the views of lecturers and students, as well as analysing employer and employment websites. Chapter Nine, the discussion chapter, analysed findings and issues raised in earlier chapters. A key finding is that both student and lecturer participants have had limited contact with the business world, suggesting that they both have very restricted knowledge of what employers need or consider as desirable.

## 10.2 Aims of the study

This study has been an outsider's quest to understand higher education in China and the direction and influence of the Chinese business environment on perceptions of importance of certain personal characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills required by new Chinese graduates entering the Chinese business world. The research has analysed the major political and educational reform programs in China as background to the interviews and surveys undertaken. However, the reform programs are pivotal. Within the argument of structure and agency, the Chinese context both critically informs and controls the current Chinese education goals, as illustrated in Chapter Three, which in summary are decentralisation of planning and control, incorporation of international ideas, 'modernisation' of teaching and learning practices, and graduates who are more profession-ready.

## 10.3 Research question and research design

This thesis explored the employability characteristics of Chinese students with an Australian qualification through the research question *What qualities and skills does a Chinese graduate with an Australian Bachelor of Business need for employment in China?* The focus of the research was to determine what makes Chinese graduates employable to Chinese employers rather than on where and how these graduates find employment in China. Therefore at an operational level the two research questions were:

1. What characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills being developed in the B Bus curriculum are particularly valued by Chinese employers?
2. What characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills are valued by Chinese employers but not developed or included in the B Bus curriculum?

A number of hypotheses were investigated and found to be supported.

Surveys and interviews were the main data sources. A pool of 76 items was developed by referencing existing questionnaires, the literature review, along with exploratory interviews between the researcher and Chinese colleagues. The survey measured three aspects of employability skills

namely, personal characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills; it did not use the term graduate attributes which is less familiar to Chinese lecturers, graduates and employers. In summary, the survey tool contained core questions about the personal characteristics, general attributes, and workplace skills of graduates, and curriculum skills and teaching focus. It also contained questions about career aspirations for students, teaching background for lecturers, and career and organisation for employers.

Data was collected between 2007 and 2009 from graduating Chinese Bachelor of Business students in China and Australia, Chinese lecturers in China and from a selected number of employers in China.

The methodology section of Chapter Six identified limitations of the data sources. Of particular importance to the author was the notion of structure and agency and adaptive theory. Occasionally the interviews were a relaxed activity that allowed ideas to be freely exchanged and for the researcher's understanding of topics to be modified. It is possible that the interviewer/interviewee relationship and the context may have produced a biased or limited outcome (Chan 2006, p. 238), but this seems unlikely given the consistency of the responses of the participants.

Research into graduate attributes formed a theoretical framework for the thesis and the literature review highlights two significant points. Firstly, while graduate attributes are not synonymous with Employability Skills<sup>32</sup> (Jackson 2009), in Australia there is great degree of overlap; and secondly, graduate attributes are not as formally integrated into Chinese higher education as they are in Australia's higher education. Therefore an adaptive theory approach was used to explore, question, interpret and modify this researcher's understanding of the current situation and opportunities for change. Utilising concepts which avoided education jargon enabled participants to express their ideas using more familiar terms, an approach intended to lessen bias, allow genuine responses and eventually to let new theory emerge. It was still possible that participants might respond with what they perceived as the researcher's or Chinese government's "desired" answers rather than their own personal perceptions. However, there was no advantage in doing this and as more data is gathered over time, the new data and the results from the current study can be reviewed and the theory evolved further.

### **10.3.1 Participants: students, lecturers and employers**

Chapter Six demonstrated how the lecturers, employers and students were recruited. Two groups of students were investigated: Chinese students completing their Australian qualification in China and

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<sup>32</sup> Employability skills are defined as: communication, teamwork, problem-solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organisation, self-management, learning and technology (Precision Consultancy 2007)

Chinese students completing their Australian qualification in Australia. In addition lecturers in China were surveyed and interviewed as were employers of Business degree graduates in China.

## 10.4 Rationale for the research

Graduate attributes have been embedded in western curricula for many years as a response to pressure from employers for graduates better prepared for their first professional position, for the rapidly changing employment environment and, from the Australian government's perspective, to position Australia as a knowledge-based economy (DEST, 2002). Much has been written about the difficulties of defining, embedding and then assessing graduate attributes. From the employment perspective there are short term benefits and long term issues to this approach. As Allen et al. (2003) argued, and as illustrated in this study, competencies can be too specific or too general. Employer respondents argued that effective use of graduates with specific rather than general competencies can provide short term productivity advantages, especially if they require less training. In the long term, however, this thesis demonstrates how the same graduates may need to review their skills depending "on how their chosen domain develops over time, both in terms of shifts in overall labour demand and of the changing technology within the domain. If their initial competencies become less relevant ... they will need to be flexible enough to adapt, for example by acquiring new skills" (Allen et al. 2003, p. 6). Ongoing learning and moving between general and specific competencies is an important requirement of the knowledge-based economy.

In China, as elsewhere, curricula change can be driven by government imperatives which may or may not be aligned with evidence-based research. This thesis significantly adds to the body of evidence that there are culturally specific graduate attributes required by Chinese B Bus graduates to gain their first professional employment and if these are incorporated into the curricula the Chinese employers might be more satisfied with their new graduate employees. The study shows there is agreement between employers, and generally between lecturers and students, about what these graduate attributes are, but there is only partial agreement between employers, lecturers and students. Effective systemic change to maintain communication between employers and lecturers needs support through institutional policy, an approach which is more common in Australia than China. Systemic change could be enhanced through structural change within Chinese universities, an approach which in Australia usually involves much negotiation and upheaval. In particular it requires considerable resourcing that includes giving the professional bodies, employers and academic staff the time and effective ways to communicate and the academic staff the skills, time and technology for curriculum renewal. This thesis recommends that evaluation should be incorporated into existing national and institutional graduate surveys. In China institutional priorities vary greatly from province to province. Moreover, improving living and working conditions and studying for higher academic qualifications

might be higher priorities than curriculum development for teaching staff. Certainly there have been changes to teaching programs “making them more flexible, broad-based and overtly market-oriented in terms of content / knowledge” rather than pedagogy (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / World Bank 1997). The current study has explored and made recommendations about how these contextual factors relate to teaching and learning being internationalised and localised.

## **10.5 Contribution to research**

Unlike Australia, very few Chinese universities have a skills or Graduate Capabilities policy, and no existing statements that can be used for curriculum and workplace skill mapping. This research may have been much simpler if it had used the method of a previous study, such as extending the 1997 Skills Survey and 2001 Skills Survey (Felstead et al. 2002) or the work of Peppas et al (1999, 2002, 2005). The researcher chose however to acknowledge that the milieu in China could not be so easily determined and needed to include a cultural dimension. While the current study builds on prior survey tools, it substantially developed its own and this is noteworthy for its blending of personal characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills and involvement of employers, lecturers and graduating students. This study has interpreted the findings from the context of the Chinese labour market, selection practices that swing between valuing experience and wanting the qualification, and the educational paradigm of what it means to internationalise a concept like graduate attributes.

The study has therefore led to some new and important observations that add to the body of research in the areas of internationalisation, curriculum change and educational drivers in the Chinese context.

### **10.5.1 Global trends and China**

The literature review identified global trends for education, as summarised by certain recommendations put forward in the Dearing report from the UK. In essence they promote the expansion of practical work-related learning opportunities for students as a strategic responsibility of government, employer, professional and educational bodies. The report also recommended “to higher education institutions and their representative bodies that they examine, with representatives of industry, ways of giving firms, especially small and medium sized enterprises, easy and co-ordinated access to information about higher education services in their area” (Dearing 1997, p. 1).

These and similar recommendations have driven curriculum change in many countries. But China is a country where economic and political liberalisation have not gone hand in hand. As in Australia, education has and continues to serve national economic and political interests, but for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) it is in addition a critical means of controlling national behaviours and values (Wright 1998, p. 394), to the extent that “exam based learning in the PRC has less to do with

pedagogy than with political control” (Agelasto & Adamson 1998, p. 408). The impact is that motivation for curriculum change, to include concepts such as learning in the workplace, and the empowerment of individuals or departments to do so is mitigated by the need to serve a number of non-economical and non-pedagogical purposes and fit with non-pedagogical structures.

As Mok and Chan (1998, p. 292) concluded a decade ago:

The strategy of privatization or marketization adopted by the CCP [for Chinese higher education] is highly instrumental, intended to improve administrative efficiency and effectiveness, rather than to make a fundamental shift of value orientation. The CCP has never committed itself theoretically or ideologically to public choice theory, the philosophical basis of marketization and privatization.

In 2010 Chinese higher education has moved from extreme bureaucratic centralism to a decentralised, bureaucratic, slightly commodified system, while Australia, the US and the UK have introduced market mechanisms to increase efficiency, accountability and consumer choice, all connecting education more closely to economic needs.

### **10.5.2 International competitiveness**

While internationalisation of education is often about the global market and the commercialisation of higher education, there has been a significant personal benefit to the researcher from the international nature of this research which can be transferred to faculty and students. Developing international awareness has been a challenging, fascinating process; but from a university perspective of economic sustainability, international competitiveness is now vital and requires a committed, whole-of-university approach. As Chan (2006, p. 143) says, “At an institutional level, internationalisation is deemed to be able to enhance the quality of education and the reputation of the University” and adds: “an internationalised faculty member is a better academic, better understands international students’ needs, is more enthusiastic about teaching them, puts theory into practice... internationalises his research, and is not inward looking” (Chan 2006, p.139). Educational institutions in China and Australia would say this is what they want.

While graduate attributes can remain generic and be internationally relevant statements, they must be understood and practiced appropriately for the local context. A course that explicitly addresses local needs and is flexible enough to accommodate alternative teaching and learning situations will satisfy some of the short term benefits and long term issues raised by Allen et al. (2005).

## 10.6 Limitations of the research

It is acknowledged that the perspectives and perceptions of the participants became the research data which can result in what Chan (2006, p. 238) refers to as “Perspective Specificity”. In her comparison of the internationalising of a Chinese and a British university she admits that if other groups of stakeholders had been included, then a different picture may have emerged. In other words different participants, for example, if I had included government officials, or more employer participants, I might have reached a different conclusion and one which could be generalisable. The participants were chosen because of their role and knowledge of the topic. The issue of whether gaps exist between what people say and do was addressed with lecturers and graduates by asking them about both the curriculum and teaching priorities and for employers by asking them about skills of new graduates and of graduates employed in the last two years. The findings of this research are currently valid as China looks externally for ideas about changing educational practices, business goals and structures, and tempering traditional values after years of focusing internally.

According to Cherrington (1989), who started from an organisational perspective, there are broadly applicable forces for and against change. The internal forces relevant to China are: new technology, changing work values, creation of new knowledge, product obsolescence, the desire for leisure and alternative work schedules. Environmental forces for change are: competition, changes in consumer demands, resource availability, social and political change and international changes/globalisation. But he found individuals resist change due to: fear of the unknown, new learning required, disruption of stable friendships and distrust of management. Finally organisational resistance to change occurs because of threat to the power structure, inertia in organizational structure, system relationships, invested funds and other interests. Currently in China the forces for change outweigh the forces against change, and the forces for change are more rapid than elsewhere.

This thesis explored the profile of new graduates from one university course taught both in China and Melbourne, and examined the link between their particular new graduate profile and perceptions of their employability in China. The course selected was the popular Victoria University Bachelor of Business degree because it allowed different student and teacher groups to be compared, namely: Chinese students who studied this course only in China; Chinese students who studied the course partly in China and partly in Melbourne; Chinese teachers of the VU Bachelor of Business course; and Chinese teachers of a Chinese Bachelor of Business course. Australian employers, lecturers and domestic graduating students in Australia were not investigated. The research method described in detail in Chapter Six allows the analysis of a small data set (two groups of students, two groups of teachers and several employers in China) providing a rich and subtle view of the respondents’ perceptions of the skills they developed in the curriculum and needed in the workplace. However, it



is limited by the paucity of comparative data, access to Bachelor of Business graduates and teachers, and the difficulty of the researcher's access to Chinese business organisations and individual business people. Further limitations were associated with language and issues around defining graduate attributes in a way that is universally comprehensible to all categories of participants.

The number of universities in Australia and China teaching Bachelor of Business degrees is large, and beyond the scope of this thesis. The extent to which the findings of this thesis can be generalised to Bachelor of Business graduates from other universities is limited, since it is assumed that each university will have a different curriculum, with a slightly different purpose and objectives underpinning its design and delivery; the ways in which different universities interpret and manifest their own graduate attributes is but one example. Chapter Two discussed a broad range of definitions of graduate attributes and the various reasons reported for their adoption. But this study has been confined to an analysis of attributes within the business curriculum and the specific employability skills required by workplaces in China.

The field research conducted for this thesis is limited to Melbourne, Australia, and to Liaoning, China, because the VU Bachelor of Business program is taught in these locations. The international literature includes examples of graduate skills as developed or as desired. There is limited research that identifies the value of graduate attributes through comparing the relevance of graduate skills as developed by one course for one location in another teaching location and in different workplace and employment environments. In a very real sense, the researcher lacked guiding literature and the outcomes are consequently groundbreaking. While not an historical study, the findings are located in the period 2005-2009 and the shifts which have occurred in educational provision during this period with larger numbers of Chinese students now accessing university both on and offshore are quite significant.

The behaviour that determines student learning and perceptions, lecturers' teaching and perceptions, and the hiring decisions made by employers all require the researcher to have some understanding of cross-cultural psychology. In this case, the researcher needed to identify her own socio-culturally bound behaviour and thought processes, and to discern their potential bias in this research both a priori and posteriori. Although it is central to the work of ethnography that the role of the observer as an 'insider' is noted, in this phenomenological model it is equally important to note that the researcher was an 'outsider'; she relied heavily on people's good will to act as interpreters and translators, which required a degree of mutual understanding of the issues. Findings from this study and subsequent recommendations need to be read knowing this potential for bias and limitations for generalisability.

## 10.7 Conclusion

The conceptual map has been tested and the voices of stakeholders have been analysed and added as a new essential component to the body of knowledge that is growing around the possible adaptation of western educational concepts to Chinese higher education curricula. The particular focus of this research was graduate attributes which were investigated through three related aspects: personal characteristics, general attributes and workplace skills. Regardless of any commitment in China to identifying Chinese graduate attributes, it is my conviction that over time a closer relationship will develop between higher education and Chinese workplaces which will assist in a strengthening of a positive *guanxi* between future students, educational institutions and employers. This *guanxi* is viewed in the neo-Confucian sense (Wong & Slater 2002) which emphasises relationships based on a willingness to extend ongoing effort to gain greater personal understanding.

## **Appendix A Survey of Australian universities' graduate attributes**

The following summary is based on research carried out by the author between November 2006 and February 2007.

Australian Universities	Graduate Attributes Website	Comments	Whole of degree program	Integration into program/ assessment	Mapping tool/guide	Discipline specific examples
The University of Adelaide	<a href="http://www.adelaide.edu.au">www.adelaide.edu.au</a>					
Australian Catholic University	<a href="http://www.acu.edu.au">www.acu.edu.au</a>					
The Australian National University	<a href="http://www.anu.edu.au">www.anu.edu.au</a>					
University of Ballarat	<a href="http://www.ballarat.edu.au">www.ballarat.edu.au</a>	Statement of intent in Learning and Teaching Policy. No other reference to graduate attributes found.	N	N	N	N
Bond University	<a href="http://www.bond.edu.au">www.bond.edu.au</a>					
University of Canberra	[Graduate Attributes Project (DEST grant \$600, 000) delayed]	"In 2006, the emphasis will be on assessment, graduate attributes, ... and aligning curriculum with graduate attributes and assessment and learning outcomes."	N	N	N	N
Central Queensland University	<a href="http://www.cqu.edu.au">www.cqu.edu.au</a>					
Charles Darwin University	<a href="http://www.cdu.edu.au/graduateattributes/index.html">http://www.cdu.edu.au/graduateattributes/index.html</a>	Website in Teaching and Learning. Graduate Attributes and Employability Skills comparison. Very brief.	N	N	N	
Charles Sturt University	<a href="http://www.csu.edu.au">www.csu.edu.au</a>					
Curtin University of Technology	<a href="http://lsn.curtin.edu.au/outcomes/ga.html">http://lsn.curtin.edu.au/outcomes/ga.html</a>	Website in Learning Support Network. Best example: Worksheet for interpreting attributes.	Y	N	N	
Deakin University	<a href="http://www.deakin.edu.au/itl/teach-learn/cases/index.htm">http://www.deakin.edu.au/itl/teach-learn/cases/index.htm</a>	Contemporary Online Teaching Cases site focuses on the work of over 70 Deakin University staff in developing and using new media and online technologies to foster student learning.	Y	(Y)	Y	Y
Edith Cowan University	<a href="http://www.ecu.edu.au/LDS/rd/units/graduate_attributes.html">http://www.ecu.edu.au/LDS/rd/units/graduate_attributes.html</a>	Website in Learning and Development Services Centre. Very brief. 'Student' site an abbreviated version of staff site.	Y	N	Y	Y
Flinders University	<a href="http://www.ssn.flinders.edu.au/skills/">http://www.ssn.flinders.edu.au/skills/</a>	Transferable Skills Portfolio	N	N	N	Y
Griffith University	<a href="http://www.griffith.edu.au/centre/gihe/griffith_graduate/project.htm">http://www.griffith.edu.au/centre/gihe/griffith_graduate/project.htm</a>	Mentioned UNE guide and Murdoch Uni website. Website difficult to find. Best practices: Griffith skills pyramid and tool kits. A self-evaluative, self-reflective tool for personal development.	(N)	Y	Y	N

James Cook University	<a href="http://www.jcu.edu.au/office/tld/teachingsupport/gradattrib.shtml">http://www.jcu.edu.au/office/tld/teachingsupport/gradattrib.shtml</a>	Brief website with links to other resources.				
La Trobe University	<a href="http://www.latrobe.edu.au">www.latrobe.edu.au</a>					
Macquarie University	<a href="http://www.mq.edu.au">www.mq.edu.au</a>					
Monash University	<a href="http://www.monash.edu.au">www.monash.edu.au</a>					
Murdoch University	<a href="http://www.tlc.murdoch.edu.au/gradatt/">http://www.tlc.murdoch.edu.au/gradatt/</a>	Acknowledged in UNE guide. Dedicated website not accessible from the homepage. Best practice: Mapping tool.	(Y)	N	Y	N
The University of New England	<a href="http://www.une.edu.au/ga/manual/index.htm">http://www.une.edu.au/ga/manual/index.htm</a>	Dedicated website not easily accessible from homepage. Best practice: unE-Portfolio & Resource Guide.		N	N	Y
The University of New South Wales	<a href="http://www.ltu.unsw.edu.au/content/course_prog_support/graduate_attributes.cfm?ss=0">http://www.ltu.unsw.edu.au/content/course_prog_support/graduate_attributes.cfm?ss=0</a>	Dedicated website in Learning and Teaching Unit. Best practice: Student E-Portfolio.	(Y)	N	Y	Y
The University of Newcastle	<a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au">www.newcastle.edu.au</a>					
Queensland University of Technology	<a href="http://www.appu.qut.edu.au/resources/curriculum/grad_caps/">http://www.appu.qut.edu.au/resources/curriculum/grad_caps/</a>	Graduate Capabilities site within T & L Resources. Includes Policy, Student E-Portfolio and Good Practice Examples.	(N)	(N)	N	Y
The University of Queensland	<a href="http://www.tedi.uq.edu.au/teaching/GradAttributes/index.html">http://www.tedi.uq.edu.au/teaching/GradAttributes/index.html</a>	Teaching and Learning Support>Website to assist mapping and embedding graduate attributes.	(Y)	(Y)	Y	N
RMIT University	<a href="http://www.rmit.edu.au/teaching">http://www.rmit.edu.au/teaching</a>	Information on graduate attributes difficult to find. Statements of intent only.	N	N	N	n/a
Southern Cross University	<a href="http://www.scu.edu.au">www.scu.edu.au</a>					
Swinburne University of Technology	<a href="http://www.swinburne.edu.au/ads/educational/academic/gradattributes.htm">http://www.swinburne.edu.au/ads/educational/academic/gradattributes.htm</a>	Description of Gas within Academic Development and Support site. Very brief.	N	N	(Y)	n/a
The University of Melbourne	<a href="http://www.unimelb.edu.au/student/attributes.html">http://www.unimelb.edu.au/student/attributes.html</a>	Statement of attributes and principles.	?	?	N	N
University of South Australia	<a href="http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/gradquals/">http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/gradquals/</a>	Mentioned on Murdoch Uni website. Website easily accessible. Best practice: Transcript2.	Y	(Y)	N	Y
University of Southern Queensland	<a href="http://www.usq.edu.au">www.usq.edu.au</a>					
University of the Sunshine Coast	<a href="http://www.usc.edu.au">www.usc.edu.au</a>					
The University of Sydney	<a href="http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/GraduateAttributes/">http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/GraduateAttributes/</a>	Website within Institute for Teaching and Learning. Best example: Case studies (pyramid image) showcasing the five attributes in action.	Y	N	N	Y
University of Tasmania	<a href="http://www.utas.edu.au">www.utas.edu.au</a>					
University of Technology	<a href="http://www.uts.edu.au/">http://www.uts.edu.au/</a>					

Sydney						
The University of Western Australia	<a href="http://www.uwa.edu.au">www.uwa.edu.au</a>					
University of Western Sydney	<a href="http://www.uws.edu.au">www.uws.edu.au</a>					
University of Wollongong	<a href="http://www.uow.edu.au/about/teaching/attributes.html">http://www.uow.edu.au/about/teaching/attributes.html</a>	Site in Teaching & Learning>Teaching Strategies for Graduate Attributes. Examples of teaching strategies used by academics to support students in achieving attributes.	?	N	N	Y
Victoria University	<a href="http://tls.vu.edu.au/SLED/QTIU/CGA/intro.htm">http://tls.vu.edu.au/SLED/QTIU/CGA/intro.htm</a>	Dedicated website hard to find. Statement of intent, and some evidence of practice in course outlines.	N	N	(Y)	N

## Appendix B Comprehensive review of graduate skill research in the United Kingdom

Taking the 1990s as the starting point, as was done above with Australia, the Dearing Report claimed that the aims of higher education in the United Kingdom “should be to sustain a learning society” and its main purposes are:

- to inspire and enable individuals to develop their capabilities to the highest potential levels throughout life, so that they grow intellectually, are well equipped for work, can contribute effectively to society and achieve personal fulfilment;
- to increase knowledge and understanding for their own sake and to foster their application to the benefit of the economy and society;
- to serve the needs of an adaptable, sustainable, knowledge-based economy at local, regional and national levels; and
- to play a major role in shaping a democratic, civilised, inclusive society” (Dearing 1997).

Dearing saw ever-expanding connections between students, educational institutions, employers, the economy and politics. He thought the relationships would benefit from a more formal document which is summarised in Table 61.

**Table 54 Relationships between stakeholders**

	Contribution	Benefits
Society and taxpayers, as represented by the Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A fair proportion of public spending and national income devoted to higher education.</li> <li>• Greater stability in the public funding and framework for higher education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A highly skilled adaptable workforce.</li> <li>• Research findings to underpin a knowledge-based economy.</li> <li>• Informed, flexible, effective citizens.</li> <li>• A greater share of higher education costs met by individual beneficiaries.</li> </ul>
Students and graduates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A greater financial contribution than now to the costs of tuition and living costs (especially for those from richer backgrounds).</li> <li>• Time and effort applied to learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More chances to participate in a larger system.</li> <li>• Better information and guidance to inform choices.</li> <li>• A high quality learning experience.</li> <li>• A clear statement of learning outcomes.</li> <li>• Rigorously assured awards which have standing across the UK and overseas.</li> <li>• Fairer income contingent arrangements for making a financial contribution when in work.</li> <li>• Better support for part-time study.</li> <li>• Larger Access Funds.</li> </ul>
Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collective commitment to rigorous assurance of quality and standards.</li> <li>• New approaches to learning and teaching.</li> <li>• Continual search for more cost-effective approaches to the delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new source of funding for teaching and the possibility of resumed expansion.</li> <li>• New funding streams for research which recognise different purposes.</li> <li>• Greater recognition from society of the value of higher education.</li> <li>• Greater stability in funding.</li> </ul>

	of higher education. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commitment to developing and supporting staff.</li> </ul>	
Higher education staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commitment to excellence.</li> <li>Willingness to seek and adopt new ways of doing things.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater recognition (financial and non-financial) of the value of all of their work, not just research.</li> <li>Proper recognition of their profession.</li> <li>Access to training and development opportunities.</li> <li>Fair pay.</li> </ul>
Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More investment in training of employees.</li> <li>Increased contribution to infrastructure of research.</li> <li>More work experience opportunities for students.</li> <li>Greater support for employees serving on institutions' governing bodies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More highly educated people in the workforce.</li> <li>Clearer understanding of what higher education is offering.</li> <li>More opportunities for collaborative working with higher education.</li> <li>Better accessibility to higher education resources for small and medium size enterprises.</li> <li>Outcomes of research.</li> </ul>
Families of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possible contribution to costs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better higher education opportunities for their children.</li> <li>Better, more flexible, higher education opportunities for mature students.</li> </ul>

Source: Dearing 1997 Summary Report Table 1 – Higher education: a new compact

The employer and employee findings of the Dearing Report<sup>33</sup> include rankings of future skills, ranked comparisons of skill differences between employees with a higher education and those without, and rankings of skill deficiencies. See Tables 62, 63 and 64.

**Table 55 Employer ranking of skill needs**

Rank	Skills / attributes	% Employers stating a need (n=119)
1	Business / management skills	34%
2	Named specialist skills other than business management	29%
3	Information technology	27%
4	Cognitive skills	22%
5	Learning to learn	21%
6	Communication skills	21%
7	Interpersonal skills / attributes	19%
8	Unspecified high level skills	17%
9	Flexibility	17%
10	Personal skills/ attributes	13%
11	Practical / vocational skills / qualifications	11%
12	Foreign languages	10%
13	Unspecified 'key' or 'core' skills	6%
14	Numerical skills	5%
Not ranked	Other	35%

<sup>33</sup> Part of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997



Source: Dearing 1997 Section 2 Annex B Table 2 – The skills needed by employers from higher education over the next 10-20 years ranked by the percentage of employers stating a need.

**Table 56 Employer ranking of skill difference between HE qualified employees and other employees**

Rank	Skills / attributes significantly better among HE qualified	% Employers stating significant difference (n=119)
1	Mental & conceptual skills	71%
2	Technical skills (eg IT, a foreign language)	63%
3	Ability to reflect and continue to learn	62%
4	Communication skills	52%
5	Personal qualities	45%
6	Understanding change	39%
7	Applied skills (eg working in a team, problem solving)	38%
8	Preparation for work (eg understanding employers' constraints)	25%

Source: Dearing 1997 Section 2 Annex B Table 7 – skills and attributes in which employees with higher education qualifications are significantly better than other employees ranked by percentage of employers stating a significant difference.

**Table 57 Deficiencies in skills and attributes of employees with higher education qualifications**

Rank	Skills / attributes	% Employers citing them (n=119)
1	Communication skills	25%
2	Interpersonal skills	13%
3	Business skills / management	11%
4	Practical / vocational skills	10%
5	Cognitive skills	8%
6	Numerical skills	7%
	Personal skills	7%
8	Named specialist skills	6%
9	Information technology	3%
10	Unspecified 'key' or 'core' skills	2%
11	Learning to learn	2%
	Modern language skills	2%
13	Unspecified high level skills	1%
14	Flexibility	1%
Not ranked	Other skills / attributes	13%

Source: Dearing 1997 Section 2 Annex B Table 11 – Deficiencies in skills and attributes of employees with higher education qualifications ranked by the percentage of employers who cited them.

A challenge that is not unique to the UK is overcoming employer bias for graduates from older universities. According to Robins and Webster (1999) the language of transferable skills is less apparent in these institutions, but the graduates are still employed. In a market driven economy this should sort itself out. In the United Kingdom, as in other industrialised countries, the skills of the workforce are relevant to policy makers trying to address the needs of the economy, social exclusion

and skills deficiencies in the workforce (Felstead & Unwin 2001). Key reports such as *Work Skills in Britain 1986 – 2001* (Felstead, Gallie & Green 2002) which includes the 1997 Skills Survey<sup>34</sup> and the 2001 Skills Survey, provide comprehensive information that has allowed economic needs to be connected with policy making about education and training. This has been achieved by examining the distribution of skills among employers, skill requirement changes that have occurred since 1986 and the value of different skills in the labour market. It uses different terminology to that in Australia, namely “Broad” and “Generic” skills. The report’s glossary states that Broad skills are “Skills required at work as measured by the qualifications required to get and do the job, the time taken to learn to do the job well, and the length of prior training for the type of work” (Felstead et al. 2002, p. 9). Generic skills are: “Job skills that are used in varying degrees in all jobs. Generic skills include literary skills, physical skills, number skills, technical ‘know-how’, high-level communication, planning, client communication, horizontal communication, problem solving and checking skills” (Felstead et al. 2002, p. 9); a third category, particular skills “refer to the importance of various detailed activities in jobs. These include reading long documents, writing forms, notices or signs, making speeches and presentations, spotting problems or faults, listening carefully to colleagues and so on” (Felstead et al. 2002, p. 9).

Valuable findings included: an increase in the importance of generic skill requirements of jobs; an increase in the average level of qualifications both to get and to do jobs; a notable increase since 1986 in the number of jobs in which advanced technology was used; no increase in employee control and task discretion even though employees were more skilled; and, of the generic skills, only high level communication skills had a positive association with pay (Felstead et al. 2002, pp. 10-13).

Part of the premise of this thesis is that businesses do not all operate and function in the same way and this in turn influences their skill requirements. Yorke (1999) found that small enterprises especially valued skills of oral communication, handling one's own workload, team working, managing others, getting to the heart of problems, critical analysis, summarising, and group problem-solving. Attributes that were valued included being able to work under pressure, commitment, working varied hours, dependability, imagination/creativity, getting on with people, and willingness to learn.

Brennan et al. in 2001 reported on a comprehensive international study that compared European and Japanese graduates. Questions covered more than graduate attributes, namely the higher education experience, attitudes, values and competencies in relation to employment and other areas of life. The resulting report included the UK graduate profile, labour market activity, features of current work, current and envisaged skills and competencies. The study, for example, asked graduates about their

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<sup>34</sup> Conducted by the National Centre for Social Research, on behalf of the Economic and Social Research Council

own perception of their competencies at time of graduation (Table 65) and as required in current employment (Table 66). Location based differences exist.

**Table 58 Competencies possessed at the time of graduation (as perceived by the graduates)**

UK	Europe	Japan
1 Learning abilities	1 Learning abilities	1 Loyalty, integrity
2 Working independently	2 Power of concentration	2 Power of concentration
3 Written communication skills	3 Working independently	3 Adaptability
4 Working in a team	4 Written communication skills	4 Getting personally involved
5 Working under pressure	5 Loyalty, integrity	5 Learning abilities
6 Accuracy, attention to detail	6 Field-specific theoretical knowledge	6 Field-specific theoretical knowledge
7 Power of concentration	7 Getting personally involved	7 Fitness for work
8 Oral communication skills	8 Critical thinking	8 Initiative
9 Problem-solving ability	9 Adaptability	9 Tolerance
10/11/12 Initiative; Adaptability; Tolerance	10 Tolerance	10 Working in a team

Source: Brennan 2001, p. 21 Table 4: ‘Top 10’ competencies possessed at the time of graduation (as perceived by the graduates)

**Table 59 Competencies required in current employment (as perceived by the graduates)**

UK	Europe	Japan
1 Working under pressure	1/2 Problem solving ability; Working independently	1 Problem solving ability
2 Oral communication skills	3 Oral communication skills	2 Fitness for work
3 Accuracy, attention to detail	4 Working under pressure	3/4/5 Oral communication skills;
4 Working in a team	5 Taking responsibility and decisions	Accuracy, attention to detail;
5 Time management	6 Working in a team	Adaptability
6 Adaptability	7 Assertiveness, decisiveness and persistence	6/7 Working in a team; Working under pressure
7 Initiative	8/9/10 Adaptability; Initiative;	8/9 Power of concentration; Time management
8 Working independently	Accuracy, attention to detail	10 Initiative
9 Taking responsibility and decisions		
10 Planning, co-ordinating and organising		

Source: Brennan 2001, p. 23, Table 5: ‘Top 10’ competencies required in current employment (as perceived by the graduates)

The study showed that UK graduates were more likely than their European counterparts:

- to be employed three years after graduation
- to be on permanent (rather than temporary) employment contracts
- to have full-time (rather than part-time) employment contracts
- to spend less time in job search activities

- to obtain their jobs by applying for advertised vacancies
- to make more use of their higher education institution's careers office
- to start their job search prior to graduation (Brennan et al. 2001, p. 12).

Table 67 summarises the job search strategies used by UK and European graduates.

**Table 60 Most important methods of job search**

<b>UK</b>	<b>Europe</b>
1 Applied for advertised vacancy (68%)	1 Applied for advertised vacancy (71%)
2 Contacted employers without knowing about a vacancy (40%)	2 Contacted employers without knowing about a vacancy (57%)
3 Used the HEI careers office (37%)	3 Contacted a public employment agency (39%)
4/5 Used personal connections (27%); Contacted a commercial employment agency (27%)	4 Used personal connections (32%)
	5 Used contacts established while working during the course of study (21%).

Source: Brennan 2001, p.14 Table 1: Most important methods of job search (multiple responses)

Graduates were also asked about the factors they perceived as important to their first employer:

For UK graduates, personality factors were easily the most important (81% rating them important or very important) followed by field of study (54%), recommendation/references (45%), main subject/field of specialisation (45%), work experience during study (41%), computer skills (40%) and exam results (39%). Compared with graduates from other European countries, recommendations and work experience appear to have been more important and field of study less important. However, there were large differences between individual countries on many of these factors (Brennan et al. 2001, p. 16).

The Skills Plus project<sup>35</sup> involved (a) working with several university departments to enhance their contributions to undergraduate skills development, (b) research with new graduate employees and their colleagues or immediate supervisors to see what employability meant in practice, (c) a pilot study with unemployed recent graduates and (d) an investigation of the efficacy beliefs of first and final year undergraduates (Lees 2002). The overall picture presented by the two respondent groups from (b) shows a close similarity regarding what they considered had been important, though there were differences of emphasis and detail at a finer level of analysis. Table 68 compares the perceptions of graduates with regard to employability requirements.

<sup>35</sup> Funded by the English Department for Education and Skills

**Table 61 Features of Employability as Reported by Recently Recruited Graduates and Their More Senior Colleagues**

Recently Recruited Graduates	More Senior Colleagues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal qualities</li> <li>• Communication skills</li> <li>• Degree experience</li> <li>• Work experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal characteristics</li> <li>• Communication skills</li> <li>• Quality of, and performance in, education</li> <li>• Work experience</li> </ul>

Source: Table 4.2. Main Features of Employability as Reported by Recently Recruited Graduates and Their More Senior Colleagues (Yorke & Harvey 2005, p. 51).

This is similar to the responses from similar groups in the Graduates' Work study of Harvey, Moon, and Geall (1997). Building on Harvey et al.'s body of work (Harvey, Geall & Moon 1998; Harvey & Knight 2003), Yorke and Harvey (2005, p. 41) argue that:

employers are growing increasingly demanding in recruiting graduates. Advertisements, Web sites, and recruitment literature are suggesting that graduates need to exhibit more and more attributes if they are going to be successful in the recruitment process. Having a degree is just the start, and employers nowadays seek a range of qualities and other achievements.

These are sometimes called workplace readiness factors and are not dissimilar to what others have termed employability skills. Furthermore, Yorke and Harvey note that in the UK not all graduate-level jobs require a first degree in a specific subject. Hence for some students,

degree-level study is more important as a vehicle for developing higher-level intellectual attributes of analysis, critical thinking, synthesis, and problem solving than it is for development of subject-specific expertise. Britain is probably at the forefront of nonsubject-specific recruitment (at least 50 percent of graduate recruitment is not subject-specific), but this trend is growing in Scandinavia and the United States. However, the practice is quite alien in some other parts of the world, notably India and most countries in eastern Asia (2005 p. 43).

Through a number of nationally funded and extensive research projects, higher education with industry groups in the UK have developed some explicit profiles of what graduates need in order to be employable. The graduate statements and aligned employer competencies are designed to direct students regarding their learning needs, focus academics regarding curriculum development and guide employers regarding appropriate expectations of graduates' abilities. For Business and Management, and Accountancy there are 12 such statements and for both the areas of perceived weakness by employers are around the ability to apply and exploit technology and to constantly appraise practical

and professional outcomes. These overlap with the researcher's understanding of gaps between one Australian university's Business curriculum and Chinese employer requirements.

Even with such profiles created and competencies defined, there are still many institutional initiatives suggested by Hawkrige (2005) for enhancing students' employability at a discipline level. While most would agree that "employment is not just about finding a job: continuing professional development, retraining and reorienting must be included, too" (Hawkrige 2005, p. 2), this thesis is limited to the employability requirements to gain the first professional position post graduation. It is in this context that this thesis uses the term 'graduate attributes' and examines the skill needs of the first two years post graduation. It was precisely to this level of 'novice professional' that the VU 'Core Graduate Attributes' and 'Graduate Capabilities' policies were described.

## Appendix C Chinese Business Environment Cultural Characteristics

The five characteristics of Chinese communications queried by their survey are unique and raise the significant question of how they are acquired.

In the past the accepted social norm for Han Xu was to communicate indirectly creating lots of relational context during each interaction. Today young professionals find that they have evolved their behaviour to more direct communications in order to achieve their goals in the international business environment (Huang et al. 2004, p. 4).

Traditionally, Qian Xu meant that

individuals, especially young people entering the workforce, would be very humble about their qualifications, experience and capability. Young Chinese professionals today are finding that to compete for positions within multi-national companies operating in China they must show pride in their accomplishments. Currently the Chinese young professional must directly and confidently state their positive attributes to potential employers. Competition for employment is making it necessary for young Chinese professionals to develop these skills or else risk unemployment (Huang et al. 2004, p. 5).

Previously Ting Hua

was characterized by a Chinese employee listening passively to his/her supervisor and following orders precisely. This at times resulted in unintended results due to possible situational changes, etc. of which the supervisor may have been unaware at the time of the instruction to the subordinate. It used to be unacceptable for an employee to express any active opinion either positive or negative when being spoken to by a supervisor. Chinese management today realizes that it is helpful and sometimes more effective and efficient to encourage employees to communicate their ideas and opinions on the job (Huang et al. 2004, p. 5).

Ke Qi

can cover both communications and actions. Thoughtful, mannerly communications seeking harmony with others resulting in peaceful relations has been the primary goal in relation to this characteristic. Sometimes this has come at a price to the originator of a communication resulting in over-simplification of an achievement or possibly gravely inconveniencing the originator from another matter or task. Young professionals today are still polite and pleasant

but are more likely to express directly if a particular request may not be convenient for them to fulfil (Huang et al. 2004, pp. 5-6).

Guanxi was once

most recognized in the practice of employment of relatives, nepotism, in business enterprises or even as entry to educational institutions. This created a heavy burden in some cases due to relatives not being qualified for positions whereby the business then possibly became unsuccessful. It also created a strained relationship with management being unable to terminate particular employees regardless of their lack of contribution to an enterprise. Although Guanxi is still an important characteristic of China business environment today it has evolved to go beyond relatives to classmates, work colleagues and other close relationships. Although Chinese management initially may be easier to reach using Guanxi, in the end it will review a potential employee candidate based on a combination of the candidates qualifications and skills with the Guanxi connection becoming secondary. This also gives the management team the freedom in the future to terminate employees based on non-performance of goals regardless of initial Guanxi introduction (Huang et al. 2004, p. 6).



## Appendix D Learning in the workplace

Universities Australia (2008) proposed a National Internship Scheme as an endorsement and formalisation of Learning in the Workplace programs, and as a means of enhancing the skills and work readiness of Australian University graduates. Its paper implies that employability skills and graduate skills have a high degree of correspondence:

Based on feedback from industry, the private sector and government, there is support for a national scheme within the context of a wider strategy that refines employability skills through university central and program area services and courses. It should draw upon wider partnerships to enhance workforce development and social inclusion, while serving basic university education goals. It is agreed that graduate employability concerns should not and cannot be matters for university action alone. This said, the need for universities to embed employability skills as part of the graduate skill set through curriculum design, course content and delivery is fully endorsed (Universities Australia 2008, p. 15).

But there are limitations to a strategy's effectiveness. Coll et al. (2008) agree that the main aim of work-integrated learning is to equip graduates with the full range of skills desired by employers, but there is also agreement that certain behavioural skills, the "soft skills", are difficult for higher education institutions to instil or even enforce (Burchell, Hodges & Rainsbury 2000; Coll & Zegwaard 2006). Other limitations include: pedagogical differences between academics, and workplace priorities as well as legal and occupational health and safety issues, but the research is strongly weighted towards the benefits. Similar and potentially other limitations exist in China (McWilliams & Henderson 2009) but if the cultural attribute component of employability skills is critical, then some form of WIL in China for VU B Bus students should enhance cross-cultural skills, and WIL in Australia, for Chinese VU B Bus students in particular, should do likewise.

In the research carried out by VU for its Review of the Bachelor of Business (see 2.1.1.2), employers were asked about the basis of their employment decisions. This question was then asked of the alumni. The rankings are compared in Table 69 below. Employers considered personal attributes, suitability of the applicant to the existing team and performance at the interview as most important factors in employment decisions. Alumni included personal presentation, business communication skills, and letter of application and Resume as important factors. Prior general employment experience was perceived as more important than prior profession-specific experience by both business respondents and alumni.

**Table 62 Ranking of Reasons for Graduate Employment**

Respondents were asked: ‘Thinking about Business Graduates recruited by your organisation please rate the importance of each of the following factors in making your employment decision’

	Business (mean score)	Alumni (mean score)
Personal attributes	1 (4.41)	2 (4.2)
Suitability of applicant to existing team	2 (4.28)	
Performance at interview	3 (4.21)	3 (4.17)
Business communication skills	4 (4.15)	5 (3.91)
Personality	5 (4.15)	1 (4.21)
Personal presentation	6 (4.12)	4 (4.11)
Letter of application and CV	7 (3.82)	6 (3.79)
General academic and technical knowledge	8 (3.57)	8 (3.38)
Awareness of Business environment and current issues	9 (3.51)	9 (3.37)
Prior general employment experience	10 (3.39)	7 (3.64)
Academic results	11 (3.23)	13 (2.79)
Specialised academic and technical knowledge	12 (3.19)	10 (3.32)
Referee reports	13 (3.18)	12 (2.99)
Prior profession specific experience in the industry	14 (2.7)	11 (3.32)
Leadership in community/sporting organisations	15 (2.69)	16 (2.35)
Reputation of institution conferring degree	16 (2.58)	14 (2.48)
Membership of community/sporting organisations	17 (2.52)	19 (2.09)
Psychometric testing	18 (2.44)	15 (2.46)
Membership of appropriate Professional Association	19 (2.22)	17 (2.34)
Geographic proximity to place of employment	20 (2.17)	18 (2.15)
A period of study abroad	21 (1.8)	20 (2.07)

Source: VU 2006, p.35 Table 14 Ranking of Reasons for Graduate Employment

Learning in the Workplace is an approach used in Australia and elsewhere to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and the reality of theory in practice. This approach can turn graduate attributes into contextualised employability skills, especially if the correspondence between the two is already great. In contexts such as China where the correspondence is less, both in the Australian curriculum with the Chinese workplace and the Chinese curriculum with the Chinese workplace, the challenge is greater. Such a strategy does seem to address shortfalls identified in the Chinese press (Chapter One) and by Chinese employers (Chapter Four). However there is the push-pull of other educational drivers in China as outlined in 2.3 and explored further in Chapter Three.

## **Appendix E Overview of the process followed in this research**

I conducted an extensive literature review of both electronic and printed sources predominantly written in English, but a few sources were translated. Academic journals in English written by expatriate Chinese were another valuable source. Chinese government websites, Chinese business websites and English newspapers in China were used extensively. The first stage of the research explored the educational situation in China and internationally and developed a contextual framework. It reviewed a range of graduate attribute tools, graduate destination surveys, curriculum development documents, generic skills checklists, employability skills inventories, lifelong learning traits and selection and recruitment criteria (these will be referred to collectively as documents.) The documents were discipline, workplace or job specific. The review included desktop or archival research, which refers to the analysis of existing records, produced or maintained for reasons other than the current research. Given that desktop research is unobtrusive, it allows hypotheses to be tested and validity can be high, but there may be missing or inaccurate records and difficult to categorise data (Furnham 2005 p.49). Therefore multiple sources were reviewed.

Based on the conclusion by Deppe, Sonderegger, Stice, Clark and Streuling (1991) that curriculum documents and pedagogical outcomes can be examined to determine the extent to which skills are currently being developed, this study included other published documents. Specifically, content analysis was used to identify commonality of skill requirement and skill development. The analysis was conducted by manually searching each of the sample documents for relevant text, highlighting it and arranging it into previously defined categories which in this case indicated the development of certain skills. The focus of the investigation was on answering the first research question.

Following the literature review, a conceptual model was developed to identify key factors that could influence identification and development of graduate attributes in the curricula. The next three phases re-visited and refined questions and ideas. Phase one was exploratory interviews with key informants (managers with human resource responsibilities and Chinese teachers visiting Australia) to ascertain the most culturally effective methodology and research instruments. Phase two was the survey data collection. Phase three included further interviewing of Chinese teachers and human resource managers in China. Frequent formal and informal interviews were conducted mostly to seek cultural advice, develop contacts, build relationships and review interpretations and implications. My research principles required a process of reciprocal, iterative research to inform theory formation.

## Appendix F Survey Section B content

**Table 63** Basis for selection of personal characteristics

Characteristic	Based on previous research by
Friendly and outgoing	Rephrasing of Peppas and Yu (2005) criterion “extraversion”
Positive	Rephrasing of Peppas and Yu (2005) criterion “disposition”
Loyal	The Confucian virtues of loyalty, filial piety, self-cultivation, modesty, frugality, diligence and benevolence remain but the social manifestations change (Reed in A and A 1998, p.360). “Students...touted his loyalty, good character, unselfishness and respect for the older generation as traits that should be promoted (Reed 1998, p. 364). Peppas and Yu (2005) criterion.
Mature	Peppas and Yu (2005) criterion.
Punctual	Peppas and Yu (2005) criterion.
Honest	“...official honesty, public ethical practice and public order were ranked the most problematic areas” (Reed in A and A 1998, p.362). Highest ranking on the list of the 54 characteristics that make up a good role model were being helpful to others, honest and kind (Reed 1998, p. 364).
Hardworking	“The excellence scholarship encourages students to study hard...is closely linked with personal qualities such as intelligence, diligence, creativity and motivation” (Zhang 1998, p. 253). Rephrasing of Peppas and Yu (2005) criterion “motivation”
Open-minded	Harvey et al (1997) “Although employers want adaptive, adaptable and transformative people, these are not distinct types of employees. All employees, in different contexts, need to be adaptive, adaptable and transformative. It may be that in certain circumstances there is more emphasis on the ‘fitting in’ and a ‘doing the job’ while in other situations, employees are expected to spend a lot of time motivating themselves and others to innovate and reconceptualise ways of working. However, the organisation of the future is unlikely to expect graduate-level employees either to merely ‘fit in’ or, conversely, to be constantly ‘transforming’”.
Assertive	Choice implies a level of individualism, which is a cultural attribute not prominent within China’s collective nature (Cheng Kai-ming 1994). Peppas and Yu (2005) criterion.
Happy	Rephrasing of Peppas and Yu (2005) criterion “disposition”
Enthusiastic	Peppas and Yu (2005) criterion.
Confident	Chinese teachers are sent overseas to gain confidence to implement new standards and strategies; others mentioned confidence to take risks (Shoresman 1998, p. 83). Peppas and Yu (2005) criterion.
Respectful	Confucian values emphasize the importance of education, obedience to authority and interpersonal harmony, which still guide individual actions and attitudes in modern Chinese societies (Hofstede and Bond, 1988). The traditional Chinese cultural values of harmony, industry, perseverance, reciprocity and familial obligation have a strong influence on the development of human resource management practice (Chow 2004, p.629).
Risk taker	Rephrasing of Peppas and Yu (2005) criterion “initiative” The Chinese government is frequently using the word “innovative” and has launched a national strategy to build an innovation-driven economy and society by 2020 (Osborn 2008). While China has the second highest number of researchers, output compared to other OECD countries with similar R and D budgets is low. The OECD says this indicates "deficiencies in the current policy instruments and governance for promoting innovation as China continues to move from a planned economy to a market-based system" (Osborn 2008, p.1).
Cooperative	In a collective society, being equal and avoiding competition or conflict are popularly accepted values. Group approaches, such as teamwork, group decision-making, group rewards, cohesiveness and consultation have a dominant influence on Chinese social and work life (Chow 2004, p.638).

## Appendix G Survey Section C content

**Table 64 Basis for selection of general attributes**

参与社会活动，如体育运动，兴趣爱好 be involved in community activities such as sport or hobbies	Peppas and Yu (2005) criterion.
学习成绩优秀 have high marks	Peppas and Yu (2005) criterion.
了解本地风俗习惯 know about local customs and traditions	In Chinese societies, traditional Chinese family business features like cronyism and nepotism co-exist either overtly or covertly with employment systems. Chinese family businesses are rooted in Chinese values, and have a strong sense of Chinese tradition (Chow 2004).
了解世界政治局势 know about world politics	Universities should include education about the world (Reed 1998, p. 365).
了解其他地区的一些风俗 know some of the customs of other places	Even for an ethnic Chinese manager, it is still necessary to understand the sub-cultural difference in Chinese society. An effective HR system from one Chinese society may not be effective or applicable to other Chinese societies (Chow 2004, p. 639). Universities should include education about the world (Reed 1998, p. 365).
毕业于重点院校 come from a good university	Rephrasing of Peppas and Yu (2005) criterion “school reputation”.
懂得何时服从 know when to conform	The traditional Chinese view tends to treat employees as family members. Employers expect loyalty from employees and reward their diligence. To some extent, compromise is reached at the expense of efficiency (Chow 2004). Party personnel within a department in the past determined where to place the assigned graduates, “this has meant a very strong incentive for conformity on the part of students and even various kinds of ingratiation with those controlling this all-important decision” (Hayhoe 1991, p. 126).
注重人际关系 value relationships	Situations such as direct confrontation, which could lead to loss of face or the ruin of relationships, should be avoided (Chow 2004, p. 640).
具有高尚品德 have high morals	In the 1980s and 1990s people were quite concerned about the deteriorating moral climate in the PRC (Reed 1995)
意识到个人行为对习惯和传统的影响 be aware of the impact of their actions on customs and traditions	Students should develop themselves as well as the nation’s prosperity and social progress (Reed 1998, p. 365).
具有责任心 show commitment	“The excellence scholarship encourages students to study hard...is closely linked with personal qualities such as intelligence, diligence, creativity and motivation” (Zhang 1998, p. 253).
注重谐调统一 value harmony	Harmony should be achieved by avoiding extreme behaviour (Chow 2004).
乐于尝试新事物，接受新挑战 show a willingness to try new ideas / tasks	“A reformed market would require labour mobility and graduates would be required to be versatile” (Agelasto 1998, p. 271).
只专注于所分配的工作 focus only on the task at hand	Rephrasing of Peppas and Yu (2005) criterion “motivation”.

## Appendix H Survey Section D,E and F content

**Table 65 Basis for selection of workplace skills**

团队合作 work in teams	“Chinese education, in fact, is designed to prepare children to function as part of a group, not to make individual choices” (Reed in A and A?? 1998, p.367). VU (2008): communicate in a variety of contexts and modes; work collaboratively.
思维敏捷 think quickly	VU (2008): problem solve in a range of settings
表达个人观点 argue for what they think is right	“The reformed system was intended to develop, not impede, students’ creativity and spirit by treating them as individuals. A reformed market would require labour mobility and graduates would be required to be versatile” (Agelasto 1998, p. 271).
善于解决问题 solve problems	VU (2008): problem solve in a range of settings
考虑他人意见 consider other people's points of view	VU (2008): communicate in a variety of contexts and modes; work collaboratively.
使用电脑处理一般性工作 use the computer for general office tasks	VU (2008): communicate in a variety of contexts and modes.
敢于做决定 make decisions	VU (2008): work autonomously.
书写报告 write reports	VU (2008): communicate in a variety of contexts and modes.
尊重同事 respect their colleagues	VU (2008): work collaboratively; work in a socially responsible manner
应用所学知识 apply their knowledge	VU (2008): problem-solve in a range of settings; locate, critically evaluate, manage and use written, numerical and electronic information.
运用中、英文交流 communicate in Chinese and English	English is necessary to be accepted fully into the international community, for acquiring foreign expertise, for developing international trade and for building international diplomacy (Adamson 1998, pp. 142-3). It is an advantage for securing well paid employment (Adamson 1998, p.143). VU (2008): communicate in a variety of contexts and modes.
洞察和预见问题 notice problems and possibilities as they arise	“Classrooms are still places that encourage neither critical nor creative thinking” (Agelasto and Adamson 1998, p.407). VU (2008): manage learning.
联系不同学科体系 make links between different subjects	VU (2008): manage learning.
区分工作重点 identify the most important tasks	VU (2008): problem solve in a range of settings.
具有独立创新的见解 come up with new ideas	There is often quiet compliance but if a course allows questioning then senior undergraduates may introduce their own ideas (Reed 1998, pp.369-70). VU (2008): problem solve in a range of settings.
服从领导 follow directions without question	“For young people who are not educated to make choices...” (Reed 1998, p.367). VU (2008): work in an environmentally, socially and culturally responsible manner.
独立工作 work without supervision	Paying for their own education and looking for employment require autonomy, personal initiative, choice making and entrepreneurialism (Reed 1998, p.371).

	VU (2008): work autonomously.
激励他人 motivate others	VU (2008): communicate in a variety of contexts and modes; work collaboratively.
按期完成工作任务 complete tasks within a deadline	VU (2008): problem solve in a range of settings.
承受压力 perform well under pressure	VU (2008): problem solve in a range of settings; work autonomously.
收集相关工作信息 gather information	VU (2008): locate, critically evaluate, manage and use written, numerical and electronic information.
建立人际关系 build relationships	VU (2008): communicate in a variety of contexts and modes; work collaboratively.
了解所从事工作的社会价值 see the value of their job outside the workplace	VU (2008): manage learning and career development opportunities.

## Appendix I Survey Section H content

Table 66 Basis for selection of validation statements

专心从事本职工作 concentrate well on given tasks	Hardworking; have high marks; show commitment
在不同场合的人际交往能力 relate well to people in a range of settings	Friendly and outgoing; cooperative; consider other people's points of view; build relationships.
批判性思维 think clearly and critically	Open-minded; solve problems.
乐于独立工作 prefer to work alone	Contrasting statement to: work in teams; build relationships.
按时并出色地完成分配的工作 complete tasks to a high standard and on time	Have high marks; complete tasks within a deadline.
适时恰当地展示领导才能 display leadership appropriately	Assertive; confident; build relationships; notice problems and possibilities as they arise; come up with new ideas.
易于从指定工作分心 are easily distracted from set tasks	Contrasting statement to: show commitment; complete tasks within a deadline.
积极热情地参与各种活动 participate enthusiastically in activities	Enthusiastic; show a willingness to try new ideas / tasks.
创新性解决问题 are creative problem solvers	Risk taker; show a willingness to try new ideas / tasks; solve problems.
对所分配工作有理解困难 struggle to understand the work presented	Contrasting statement to: show a willingness to try new ideas / tasks; solve problems.
需要他人协作来完成工作任务 need additional support with their work	Follow directions without question; work without supervision.
善于联系本职工作与外界工作环境 connect the outside workplace with their jobs	See the value of their job outside the workplace.
礼貌友善地完成指示 fulfil instructions courteously	Respectful; cooperative; build relationships.



## Appendix J Ethics Approval documents

Before conducting the study the researcher submitted an application to the Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development Ethics committee at Victoria University for approval for a project involving human participants. It included the following attachments. The Human Research Ethics committee approved the research in June 2006 (HRETH: 06/78 Connecting Higher Education and the Workplace in China).

<b>ATTACHMENT A1</b>	<b><u>STUDENT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY</u></b>
<b>ATTACHMENT A2</b>	<b><u>LECTURER CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY</u></b>
<b>ATTACHMENT A3</b>	<b><u>EMPLOYER CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY</u></b>
<b>ATTACHMENT B</b>	<b><u>PROJECT STATEMENT</u> Information for participants</b>
<b>ATTACHMENT B2</b>	<b><u>Explanation of Core Graduate Attributes</u> Information for participants</b>
<b>ATTACHMENT C</b>	<b><u>EMAIL / LETTER TO RECRUIT EMPLOYERS / LECTURERS / STUDENTS</u></b>
<b>ATTACHMENT D</b>	<b><u>REVOCATION OF CONSENT FORM</u></b>  For participants who wish to withdraw from the project
<b>ATTACHMENT E1</b>	<b>STUDENT SURVEY</b>
<b>ATTACHMENT E2</b>	<b>LECTURER SURVEY</b>
<b>ATTACHMENT E3</b>	<b>EMPLOYER SURVEY</b>
<b>ATTACHMENT E4</b>	<b>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</b>



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**ATTACHMENT A1      STUDENT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY**

I would like to invite you to be a part of a study into:

**Connecting higher education and the workplace in China**

***CERTIFICATION BY PARTICIPANT***

I, ..... of .....

certify that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the research investigation entitled:

**Connecting higher education and the workplace in China** being conducted at  
Victoria University and at offshore partner locations by: Ms Fiona Henderson.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks to me associated with the process to be carried out in the study, have been fully explained to me by Fiona Henderson. I freely consent to participation involving questionnaire completion; if I choose I may also be interviewed for a maximum of 30 minutes or participate in a group discussion for a maximum of an hour.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way. I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed: .....(participant)

Witness other than the researcher: .....      **Date:** .....

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher (Fiona Henderson by phone (613 99194972) or email [Fiona.Henderson@vu.edu.au](mailto:Fiona.Henderson@vu.edu.au) or her supervisors: Brenda Cherednichenko (phone 613 99195336) or email [Brenda.cherednichenko@vu.edu.au](mailto:Brenda.cherednichenko@vu.edu.au) and Tarquam McKenna (phone 613 99193371) or email [tarquam.mckenna@vu.edu.au](mailto:tarquam.mckenna@vu.edu.au)

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MC, Melbourne, 8001 (tel: 613-9919 4710) or contact Prof Maureen Ryan, School of Education Services. (ph. 613-99194402)



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**ATTACHMENT A2      LECTURER CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY**

I would like to invite you to be a part of a study into:

**Connecting higher education and the workplace in China**

***CERTIFICATION BY PARTICIPANT***

I, ..... of .....

certify that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the research investigation entitled:

**Connecting higher education and the workplace in China** being conducted at  
Victoria University and at offshore partner locations by: Ms Fiona Henderson.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks to me associated with the process to be carried out in the study, have been fully explained to me by Fiona Henderson and that I freely consent to participation involving questionnaire completion.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way. I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed: .....(participant)

Witness other than the researcher: .....      **Date:** .....

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher (Fiona Henderson by phone (613 99194972) or email [Fiona.Henderson@vu.edu.au](mailto:Fiona.Henderson@vu.edu.au) or her supervisors: Brenda Cherednichenko (phone 613 99195336) or email [Brenda.cherednichenko@vu.edu.au](mailto:Brenda.cherednichenko@vu.edu.au) and Tarquam McKenna (phone 613 99193371) or email [tarquam.mckenna@vu.edu.au](mailto:tarquam.mckenna@vu.edu.au)

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MC, Melbourne, 8001 (tel: 613-9919 4710) or contact Prof Maureen Ryan, School of Education Services. (ph. 613-99194402)



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**ATTACHMENT A3**

**EMPLOYER CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY**

I would like to invite you to be a part of a study into:

**Connecting higher education and the workplace in China**

***CERTIFICATION BY PARTICIPANT***

I, ..... of .....

certify that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the research investigation entitled:

**Connecting higher education and the workplace in China** being conducted at Victoria University and at offshore locations by Ms Fiona Henderson.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks to me associated with the process to be carried out in the study, have been fully explained to me by Fiona Henderson and that I freely consent to participation involving questionnaire completion.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way. I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed: .....(participant)

Witness other than the researcher: ..... **Date:** .....

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher (Fiona Henderson by phone (613 99194972) or email [Fiona.Henderson@vu.edu.au](mailto:Fiona.Henderson@vu.edu.au) or her supervisors: Brenda Cherednichenko (phone 613 99195336) or email [Brenda.cherednichenko@vu.edu.au](mailto:Brenda.cherednichenko@vu.edu.au) and Tarquam McKenna (phone 613 99193371) or email [tarquam.mckenna@vu.edu.au](mailto:tarquam.mckenna@vu.edu.au)

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MC, Melbourne, 8001 (tel: 613-9919 4710) or contact Prof Maureen Ryan, School of Education Services. (ph. 613-99194402)



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## **ATTACHMENT B**

## **PROJECT STATEMENT Information for participants**

### **Connecting higher education and the workplace in China**

The research team invites you to participate in a project which seeks to understand and enhance the employability of Business course graduates from universities in China. In particular the project relates to onshore and offshore Business courses run by Victoria University. We need your assistance to do this well.

The research question is: What are the capabilities that support employability of graduates in China?

The aims of the study are:

- To develop informed insights into the nature of the CGA applicable to International Chinese students completing a Bachelor of Business at Victoria University in Melbourne and in China
- To develop a framework for identifying graduate attributes and employability skills in non-Western communities through the case study of one qualification that is taught in both Australia and China
- To document the needs of several Chinese business organisations in engaging with CGAs as identified and used at Victoria University

To do this I intend to collect data by:

Phase 1	Document analysis	1a	Curriculum documents
		1b	Institution questionnaires
Phase 2	Employers	2a	Chinese State-owned enterprises
		2b	Chinese owned businesses
		2c	International businesses operating in China
Phase 3	Student perceptions	3a	International Chinese students at VU in B.Bus.
		3b	Chinese students in VU B.Bus in China

		3c	Chinese students in a Chinese Business degree
Phase 4	Lecturer perceptions	4a	Chinese lecturers of VU B.Bus. in China
		4b	Chinese lecturers of a Chinese Business degree

Phases 2,3 and 4 will involve survey and / or interviews.

## YOUR PARTICIPATION

We seek to engage students, lecturers and employers in voluntary surveys and discussions about a) which capabilities (CGAs) are being developed in which courses, b) the Chinese workplace, c) the employment process in China and d) Chinese employer requirements. Surveys will be emailed to all potential participants. Completing the survey online ensures anonymity. The email will also ask for those willing to be interviewed to reply to the email. Completing this survey , and making oneself available to be interviewed are two separate actions. Participants may withdraw from either or both at any time. Withdrawal will not hinder nor jeopardise participants in any way. Any identifying names or indicators will be removed from the data.

## NOTE ON RISK TO PARTICIPANTS

The research team believes the risks for participants in the project are minimal and are far outweighed by the likely benefits for the student, teachers and employers.

However some participants may feel uncomfortable talking about their teaching, learning and / or professional experience. Additionally some students may feel that their participation in the research could affect their academic performance and results.

All participants are free to withdraw from participation in the research at any time. Any material submitted as data may be withdrawn at any time from the research.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher (Fiona Henderson by phone (613 99194972) or email [Fiona.Henderson@vu.edu.au](mailto:Fiona.Henderson@vu.edu.au) or her supervisors: Brenda Cherednichenko (phone 613 99195336) or email [Brenda.cherednichenko@vu.edu.au](mailto:Brenda.cherednichenko@vu.edu.au) and Tarquam McKenna (phone 613 99193371) or email [tarquam.mckenna@vu.edu.au](mailto:tarquam.mckenna@vu.edu.au)

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MC, Melbourne, 8001 (tel: 613-9919 4710) or contact Prof Maureen Ryan, School of Education Services. (ph. 613-99194402)



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**ATTACHMENT B2      Explanation of Core Graduate Attributes    Information for participants**

**Connecting higher education and the workplace in China**

**Excerpts from Victoria University's Core Graduate Attribute Policy**

**Purpose** The purpose of developing core graduate attributes is threefold:

1. To provide a framework for *curricula* which develop students' core skills, to be used for whatever purposes they may choose in the contexts of professional practice, scholarship and citizenship. The broad aim is to prepare students for lifelong learning in the four scholarships of discovery, application, integration and teaching.
2. To contribute to the positioning of the *University*. This is aimed at both attracting students to the University and making our students more attractive to employers.
3. To improve employment outcomes for *graduates*. Employment outcomes will be influenced by both the actual and the perceived "human capital" of graduates; therefore this purpose is closely linked to the other two.

**Policy Statement** Victoria University's Core Graduate Attributes (CGAs) are skills that must be developed in every higher education program at Victoria University, in the context of its disciplinary base. They are generic skills that all students should possess at graduation in addition to the specific knowledge and skills of their discipline.

3. Accordingly, all higher education undergraduate courses will include the systematic development throughout the course of the following five core graduate attributes:
    - a. A Victoria University graduate is an effective problem solver in a range of settings, including professional practice;
    - b. A Victoria University graduate can locate, evaluate, manage and use information effectively;
    - c. A Victoria University graduate communicates effectively as a professional and as a citizen;
    - d. A Victoria University graduate can work both autonomously and collaboratively as a professional;
    - e. A Victoria University graduate can work effectively in settings of social and cultural diversity.



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**ATTACHMENT C**

**EMAIL / LETTER TO RECRUIT EMPLOYERS / LECTURERS / STUDENTS**

**Connecting higher education and the workplace in China**

(Date)

Dear

I am Fiona Henderson, a lecturer and PhD student from the School of Education, Victoria University, working under the supervision of Associate Professor Brenda Cherednichenko and Dr Tarquam McKenna.

As part of my research I am conducting three surveys: one with Chinese employers of Business degree graduates, one with Chinese lecturers of a Bachelor of Business course in China and one with final year Chinese Bachelor of Business students. The purpose is to determine the skills (sometime referred to as graduate attributes) developed by students whilst undertaking this degree and how this compares with information from interviews with Chinese employers about their requirements for new graduates. The resulting knowledge about skill development should be valuable for future students.

I seek your permission to work with you in this project. The survey will require about 10-15 minutes to complete. The information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence and at no stage will any participant be identified. There are no right or wrong answers. If you are also available for a brief interview please indicate by replying to this email.

Attached are copies of a) Information to all participants and b) Consent forms for all participants.

Thank you for your co-operation and support in my PhD study. If there is anything you would like to discuss or if you are available for an interview please contact me (Melbourne 613 9919 4972 or Fiona.Henderson@vu.edu.au ). I anticipate at least two trips to China in the next two years.

Fiona Henderson

PhD Student

School of Education





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**ATTACHMENT D      REVOCATION OF CONSENT FORM**

**For participants who wish to withdraw from the project**

**Connecting higher education and the workplace in China**

I, .....of  
(address),.....

hereby wish to WITHDRAW my consent to participate in the research proposal called: **Connecting higher education and the workplace in China**

and understand that such withdrawal WILL NOT jeopardise any treatment or my relationship with Victoria University.

Any data already collected may / may not be included in the research project.

Signature:.....Date:.....

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher (Fiona Henderson by phone (613 99194972) or email [Fiona.Henderson@vu.edu.au](mailto:Fiona.Henderson@vu.edu.au) or her supervisors: Brenda Cherednichenko (phone 613 99195336) or email [Brenda.cherednichenko@vu.edu.au](mailto:Brenda.cherednichenko@vu.edu.au) and Tarquam McKenna (phone 613 99193371) or email [tarquam.mckenna@vu.edu.au](mailto:tarquam.mckenna@vu.edu.au)

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## ATTACHMENT E1 STUDENT SURVEY

This questionnaire is designed to enquire about what skills you are developing as a student about to graduate, who will soon be looking for employment. You are asked for information about yourself and about your perceptions as a graduating student of the skills that employers are looking for.

All information received remains confidential with the researcher. The questionnaire is not designed to report on individual student opinions but to gather collective views, perspectives and attitudes.

Please answer as directly and fully as possible.

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE: all information is CONFIDENTIAL.

Thank you for your time and support.

This section asks for information about yourself and your future.

1. What degree are you completing?

2. What sort of job do you think you will get when you graduate?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What sort of work do you hope to be doing 5 years from now?

4. What further courses or professional development programs do you think you will need to achieve this goal?

\_\_\_\_\_

This question asks about the importance for graduating students of certain **personal** characteristics.

5. Please circle 6 characteristics that you think are important in graduating students:

friendly and outgoing

positive

loyal

mature

punctual

honest

hardworking

open-minded

assertive

happy

enthusiastic

confident

respectful

risk taker

cooperative

Please add any other personal quality that you think should be considered:

This question asks about the importance for graduating students of certain **attributes**.

6. Graduating students should:	Not important	Slightly important	Quite important	Highly important
be involved in community activities such as sport or hobbies				
have high marks				
know about local customs and traditions				
know about world politics				
know some of the customs of other places				
come from a good university				
know when to conform				
value relationships				
have high morals				
be aware of the impact of their actions on customs and traditions				
show commitment				
value harmony				
show a willingness to try new ideas / tasks				
focus only on the task at hand				
<b>Please add any other 'life skill' that you think should be considered:</b>				

The next question asks about the importance for graduating students of certain **workplace skills**.

7. Graduating students preparing for employment in the workplace should be able to:	Not important	Slightly important	Quite important	Highly important
work in teams				
think quickly				
argue for what they think is right				
solve problems				
consider other people's points of view				
use the computer for general office tasks				
make decisions				
write reports				
respect their colleagues				
apply their knowledge				
communicate in Chinese and English				
notice problems and possibilities as they arise				
make links between different subjects				
identify the most important tasks				
come up with new ideas				
follow directions without question				
work without supervision				
motivate others				
complete tasks within a deadline				
perform well under pressure				
gather information				
build relationships				
see the value of their job outside the workplace				
<b>Please add any other workplace skill that you think should be considered:</b>				

The next questions ask about the teaching and learning program.

<b>8. How important is it that the curriculum allows graduating students develop the skills to:</b>	Not important	Slightly important	Quite important	Highly important
work in teams				
think quickly				
argue for what they think is right				
solve problems				
consider other people's points of view				
use the computer for general office tasks				
make decisions				
write reports				
respect their colleagues				
apply their knowledge				
communicate in Chinese and English				
notice problems and possibilities as they arise				
make links between different subjects				
identify the most important tasks				
come up with new ideas				
follow directions without question				
work without supervision				
motivate others				
complete tasks within a deadline				
perform well under pressure				
gather information				
build relationships				
see the value of their job outside the workplace				
<b>Please add any other skill that you think the curriculum should develop:</b>				

<b>9. How frequently do the teachers encourage graduating students to acquire the following skills:</b>	Not at all	Sometimes	Often	Always
work in teams				
think quickly				
argue for what they think is right				
solve problems				
consider other people's points of view				
use the computer for general office tasks				
make decisions				
write reports				
respect their colleagues				
apply their knowledge				
communicate in Chinese and English				
notice problems and possibilities as they arise				
make links between different subjects				
identify the most important tasks				
come up with new ideas				

follow directions without question				
work without supervision				
motivate others				
complete tasks within a deadline				
perform well under pressure				
gather information				
build relationships				
see the value of their job outside the workplace				
<b>Please add any other skill that you think graduating students should develop:</b>				

***Thank you for your assistance***

**ATTACHMENT E2****LECTURER SURVEY**

This questionnaire is designed to enquire about what skills are developed in graduating students. You are asked for information about yourself and the responsibilities of your job, about your perceptions of graduating students and about the skills developed in the learning and teaching program.

All information received remains confidential with the researcher. The questionnaire is not designed to report on individual lecturer opinions but to gather collective views, perspectives and attitudes.

Please answer as directly and fully as possible.

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE: all information is CONFIDENTIAL.

Thank you for your time and support.

This section asks for information about yourself and your teaching.

**1. What degree subjects do you teach?**

---

---

---

---

**2. How long have you been teaching for at university?**

☐ less than 5 years

☐ 6 - 10 years

☐ 11 - 20 years

☐ 21 + years

**3. What is your highest qualification?**

---

**4. What further courses or professional development programs are you encouraged to attend by your department / university?**

---

This question asks about the importance for graduating students of certain **personal** characteristics.

**5. Please circle 6 characteristics that you think are important in graduating students:**

friendly and outgoing

positive

loyal

mature

punctual

honest

hardworking

open-minded

assertive

happy

enthusiastic

confident

respectful

risk taker

cooperative

**Please add any other personal quality that you think should be considered:**

This question asks about the importance for graduating students of certain **attributes**.

6. Graduating students should:	Not important	Slightly important	Quite important	Highly important
be involved in community activities such as sport or hobbies				
have high marks				
know about local customs and traditions				
know about world politics				
know some of the customs of other places				
come from a good university				
know when to conform				
value relationships				
have high morals				
be aware of the impact of their actions on customs and traditions				
show commitment				
value harmony				
show a willingness to try new ideas / tasks				
focus only on the task at hand				
<b>Please add any other 'life skill' that you think should be considered:</b>				

This question asks about the importance for graduating students of certain **workplace skills**.

7. Graduating students preparing for employment in the workplace should be able to:	Not important	Slightly important	Quite important	Highly important
work in teams				
think quickly				
argue for what they think is right				
solve problems				
consider other people's points of view				
use the computer for general office tasks				
make decisions				
write reports				
respect their colleagues				
apply their knowledge				
communicate in Chinese and English				
notice problems and possibilities as they arise				
make links between different subjects				
identify the most important tasks				
come up with new ideas				
follow directions without question				
work without supervision				
motivate others				
complete tasks within a deadline				
perform well under pressure				
gather information				
build relationships				
see the value of their job outside the workplace				
<b>Please add any other workplace skill that you think should be considered:</b>				

The next questions ask about the teaching and learning program.

<b>8. How important is it that the curriculum allows graduating students develop the skills to:</b>	Not important	Slightly important	Quite important	Highly important
work in teams				
think quickly				
argue for what they think is right				
solve problems				
consider other people's points of view				
use the computer for general office tasks				
make decisions				
write reports				
respect their colleagues				
apply their knowledge				
communicate in Chinese and English				
notice problems and possibilities as they arise				
make links between different subjects				
identify the most important tasks				
come up with new ideas				
follow directions without question				
work without supervision				
motivate others				
complete tasks within a deadline				
perform well under pressure				
gather information				
build relationships				
see the value of their job outside the workplace				
<b>Please add any other skill that you think the curriculum should develop:</b>				

<b>9. How frequently do you as the teacher encourage graduating students to acquire the following skills:</b>	Not at all	Sometimes	Often	Always
work in teams				
think quickly				
argue for what they think is right				
solve problems				
consider other people's points of view				
use the computer for general office tasks				
make decisions				
write reports				
respect their colleagues				
apply their knowledge				
communicate in Chinese and English				
notice problems and possibilities as they arise				
make links between different subjects				
identify the most important tasks				
come up with new ideas				
follow directions without question				
work without supervision				



motivate others				
complete tasks within a deadline				
perform well under pressure				
gather information				
build relationships				
see the value of their job outside the workplace				
<b>Please add any other skill that you think graduating students should develop:</b>				

***Thank you for your assistance***

## ATTACHMENT E3      EMPLOYER SURVEY

This questionnaire is designed to enquire about how decisions are made and what criteria are used when you are employing a new graduate. You are asked for information about yourself and the responsibilities of your job, about your perceptions of new graduates whom you are employing and about the graduates you have employed.

All information received remains confidential with the researcher. The questionnaire is not designed to report on individual employer approaches or requirements but to gather collective views, perspectives and attitudes.

Please answer as directly and fully as possible.

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE: all information is CONFIDENTIAL.

Thank you for your time and support.

This section asks for information about yourself and your business.
---

**1. What level of management would you describe yourself?**

- ☐ first
- ☐ middle
- ☐ senior

**2. How long have you been working in this role?**

- ☐ less than 5 years
- ☐ 6 - 10 years
- ☐ 11 - 20 years
- ☐ 21 + years

**3. What is your highest qualification?**

---

**4. How many employees are there in the organisation?**

- ☐ less than 20
- ☐ 20 – 200
- ☐ more than 200

**5. How would you best describe your business?**

- ☐ family owned and run, only in China
- ☐ family owned and run, some overseas locations
- ☐ state owned enterprise
- ☐ government department
- ☐ international business organisation
- ☐ multinational business organisation

**6. What further courses or professional development programs do you encourage your employees to do?**

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This question asks about the importance for graduating students to have certain **personal** characteristics.

**7. Please circle 6 characteristics that you think are important in graduating students:**

friendly and outgoing

positive

loyal

mature

punctual

honest

hardworking

open-minded

assertive

happy

enthusiastic

confident

respectful

risk taker

cooperative

**Please add any other personal quality that you think should be considered:**

This question asks about the importance of certain **attributes** for graduating students.

	Not important	Slightly important	Quite important	Highly important
<b>8. Graduating students should:</b>				
be involved in community activities such as sport or hobbies				
have high marks				
know about local customs and traditions				
know about world politics				
know some of the customs of other places				
come from a good university				
know when to conform				
value relationships				
have high morals				
be aware of the impact of their actions on customs and traditions				
show commitment				
value harmony				
show a willingness to try new ideas / tasks				
focus only on the task at hand				
<b>Please add any other 'life skill' that you think should be considered:</b>				

The next question asks about the importance for new graduates of certain **workplace skills**.

<b>9. New graduates in the workplace should be able to:</b>	Not important	Slightly important	Quite important	Highly important
work in teams				
think quickly				
argue for what they think is right				
solve problems				
consider other people's points of view				
use the computer for general office tasks				
make decisions				
write reports				
respect their colleagues				
apply their knowledge				
communicate in Chinese and English				
notice problems and possibilities as they arise				
make links between different subjects				
identify the most important tasks				
come up with new ideas				
follow directions without question				
work without supervision				
motivate others				
complete tasks within a deadline				
perform well under pressure				
gather information				
build relationships				
see the value of their job outside the workplace				
<b>Please add any other workplace skill that you think should be considered:</b>				

The following question seeks information about the recent graduates in your workplace.

<b>10. When thinking about the graduates you have employed in the last 2 years, how important is it that they display these behaviours and attitudes?</b>	Not important	Slightly important	Quite important	Highly important
concentrate well on given tasks				
relate well to people in a range of settings				
think clearly and critically				
prefer to work alone				
complete tasks to a high standard and on time				
display leadership appropriately				
are easily distracted from set tasks				
participate enthusiastically in activities				
are creative problem solvers				
struggle to understand the work presented				
need additional support with their work				
connect the outside workplace with their jobs				
fulfil instructions courteously				
<b>Please comment on any other behaviour:</b>				

*Thank you for your assistance*



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**ATTACHMENT E4**

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**These are an indication of the questions which will be asked.**

1. Are you familiar with the new graduates employed by your organisation?
2. What general qualities does your organisation look for in a new graduate employee?
3. Are any areas/activities of your organisation more suitable for new graduate employees than other areas/activities?
4. Would you expect new graduate employees to have specific business skills?
5. If your organisation were able to provide student internship opportunities what qualities / skills would you expect the students to possess?
6. Once a graduate employee has been with you for two years, what qualities / skills would you expect them to have acquired?
7. What training courses do you encourage your employees to attend?

## Appendix K Comparison of general attribute responses of Chinese lecturers

The cross tabulated results of Chinese lecturers of VU programs and Chinese lecturers of non-VU programs in China are presented in Table 74 with the resulting level of significance as determined by the Mann Whitney test; no significant differences were found.

Chinese teaching staff who are not-partners are in the non-shaded cells; teaching staff who are teach into VU programs are in the shaded cells.

**Table 67 Cross-tabulation of responses of Chinese lecturers for importance of certain general attributes**

6. 求职毕业生应: Graduating students should:	不重要 Not important	较重要 Slightly important	重要 Quite important	很重要 Highly important	Asymp. Sig. (2- tailed)
	Cross-tabulation				
参与社会活动，如体育运动，兴趣爱好 be involved in community activities such as sport or hobbies	0.0%	58.6%	27.6%	13.8%	
	5.9%	47.1%	29.4%	17.6%	
All	2.2%	54.3%	28.3%	15.2%	
学习成绩优秀 have high marks	0.0%	44.8%	48.3%	6.9%	
	0.0%	35.3%	35.3%	29.4%	
All		41.3%	43.5%	15.2%	
了解本地风俗习惯 know about local customs and traditions	13.3%	30.0%	43.3%	13.3%	
	5.9%	52.9%	41.2%	0.0%	
All	10.6%	38.3%	42.6%	8.5%	
了解世界政治局势 know about world politics	20.7%	44.8%	27.6%	6.9%	
	0.0%	64.7%	23.5%	11.8%	
All	13.0%	52.2%	26.1%	8.7%	
了解其他地区的一些风俗 know some of the customs of other places	31.0%	51.7%	10.3%	6.9%	
	17.6%	58.8%	23.5%	0.0%	
All	26.1%	54.3%	15.2%	4.3%	
毕业于重点院校 come from a good university	20.0%	30.0%	43.3%	6.7%	
	23.5%	58.8%	11.8%	5.9%	
All	21.3%	40.4%	31.9%	6.4%	
懂得何时服从 know when to conform	3.3%	30.0%	36.7%	30.0%	
	5.9%	17.6%	47.1%	29.4%	
All	4.3%	25.5%	40.4%	29.8%	
注重人际关系 value relationships	3.3%	10.0%	46.7%	40.0%	
	5.9%	11.8%	41.2%	41.2%	
All	4.3%	10.6%	44.7%	40.4%	
具有高尚品德	0.0%	10.0%	26.7%	63.3%	

have high morals	5.9%	5.9%	41.2%	47.1%	
All	2.1%	8.5%	31.9%	57.4%	
意识到个人行为对习惯和传统的影响 be aware of the impact of their actions on customs and traditions	6.9%	55.2%	24.1%	13.8%	
	0.0%	29.4%	58.8%	11.8%	.074
All	4.3%	45.7%	37.0%	13.0%	
具有责任心 show commitment	0.0%	3.3%	23.3%	73.3%	
	5.9%	0.0%	17.6%	76.5%	.873
All	2.1%	2.1%	21.3%	74.5%	
注重谐调统一 value harmony	6.7%	16.7%	36.7%	40.0%	
	5.9%	5.9%	52.9%	35.3%	.868
All	6.4%	12.8%	42.6%	38.3%	
乐于尝试新事物，接受新挑战 show a willingness to try new ideas / tasks	0.0%	13.3%	43.3%	43.3%	
	0.0%	41.2%	23.5%	35.3%	.170
All		23.4	36.2%	40.4%	
只专注于所分配的工作 focus only on the task at hand	40.0%	36.7%	23.3%	0.0%	
	5.9%	64.7%	23.5%	5.9%	.058
All	27.7%	46.8%	23.4%	2.1%	

## Appendix L Comparison of students' results for the three contexts

Table 68 Summary of the students' results for the employment, curriculum and teaching contexts

Skill / Attribute	Comment / feature – employment context	Comment / feature – curriculum context	Comment / feature – teacher context
团队合作work in teams	<div>N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.</div> <div>Total 88%</div> <div>Liaoning</div> <div>Melbourne</div>	<div>N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.</div> <div>Total 83%</div> <div>Liaoning 43%</div> <div>Melbourne 57%</div>	<div>N. S. O. A.</div> <div>Total 78%</div> <div>Liaoning</div> <div>Melbourne</div>
思维敏捷think quickly	<div>N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.</div> <div>Total</div> <div>Liaoning 47% 31%</div> <div>Melbourne 60% 17%</div>	<div>N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.</div> <div>Total 72%</div> <div>Liaoning</div> <div>Melbourne</div>	<div>N. S. O. A.</div> <div>Total 83%</div> <div>Liaoning</div> <div>Melbourne</div>
表达个人观点argue for what they think is right	<div>N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.</div> <div>Total</div> <div>Liaoning 41% 37%</div> <div>Melbourne 65% 20%</div>	<div>N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.</div> <div>Total 78%</div> <div>Liaoning</div> <div>Melbourne</div>	<div>N. S. O. A.</div> <div>Total 78%</div> <div>Liaoning</div> <div>Melbourne</div>
善于解决问题solve problems	<div>N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.</div> <div>Total 90%</div> <div>Liaoning</div> <div>Melbourne</div>	<div>N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.</div> <div>Total 86%</div> <div>Liaoning</div> <div>Melbourne</div>	<div>N. S. O. A.</div> <div>Total 22% 77%</div> <div>Liaoning</div> <div>Melbourne</div>
考虑他人意见consider other people's points of view	<div>N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.</div> <div>Total 0% 83%</div> <div>Liaoning</div> <div>Melbourne</div>	<div>N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.</div> <div>Total 74%</div> <div>Liaoning 45%</div> <div>Melbourne 55%</div>	<div>N. S. O. A.</div> <div>Total 75%</div> <div>Liaoning</div> <div>Melbourne</div>
使用电脑处理一般性工作use the computer for general office tasks	<div>N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.</div> <div>Total</div> <div>Liaoning 20% 37%</div> <div>Melbourne 34% 19%</div>	<div>N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.</div> <div>Total 83%</div> <div>Liaoning 27%</div> <div>Melbourne 10%</div>	<div>N. S. O. A.</div> <div>Total 76%</div> <div>Liaoning</div> <div>Melbourne</div>
敢于做决定make decisions	<div>N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.</div> <div>Total 81%</div>	<div>N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I.</div> <div>Total</div>	<div>N. S. O. A.</div> <div>Total 77%</div>



	Liaoning Melbourne	Liaoning Melbourne	47% 29% 61% 17%	Liaoning Melbourne
书写报告write reports	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total Liaoning 76% Melbourne 85%	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total Liaoning 76% Melbourne 79%	N. S. O. A. Total 0% 77%	Liaoning Melbourne
尊重同事respect their colleagues	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total Liaoning 85% Melbourne	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total Liaoning 39% Melbourne 53%	N. S. O. A. Total 74%	Liaoning Melbourne
应用所学知识apply their knowledge	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total Liaoning 80% Melbourne 47% 58%	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total Liaoning 83% Melbourne 22% 35%	N. S. O. A. Total 77%	Liaoning Melbourne
运用中、英文交流c ommunicate in Chinese and English	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total Liaoning 91% Melbourne	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total Liaoning 84% Melbourne	N. S. O. A. Total 74% Liaoning 12% 55% Melbourne 26% 43%	
洞察和预见问题not ice problems and possibilities as they arise	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total Liaoning 47% Melbourne 63%	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total Liaoning 86% Melbourne 49% 69%	Response pattern similar: the majority of all students responding “Often”, with a similar balance for each group for “Sometimes” and “Always”.	
联系不同学科体系 make links between different subjects	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total Liaoning 29% 25% Melbourne 51% 7%	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total Liaoning 83% Melbourne 33% 44%	N. S. O. A. Total 77%	Liaoning Melbourne
区分工作重点identi fy the most important tasks	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total Liaoning 0% 78% Melbourne	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total Liaoning 83% Melbourne	N. S. O. A. Total 83%	Liaoning Melbourne
具有独立创新的见 解come up with new ideas	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total Liaoning 0% 86% Melbourne 47% 37% 61% 25%	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total Liaoning 81% Melbourne	T the majority of all students responding “Often”, with a similar balance for each group for “Sometimes” and “Always”.	

服从领导follow directions without question	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 83% Liaoning Melbourne	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 83% Liaoning 33% Melbourne 45%	N. S. O. A. Total 44% 36% Liaoning Melbourne
独立工作work without supervision	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 82% Liaoning 25% Melbourne 14%	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 78% Liaoning 35% 43% Melbourne 57% 22%	The majority of all students responding “Often”, with a similar balance for each group for “Sometimes” and “Always”.
激励他人motivate others	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 78% Liaoning Melbourne	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 81% Liaoning Melbourne	N. S. O. A. Total 41% 38% Liaoning Melbourne
按期完成工作任务c omplete tasks within a deadline	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 0% 88% Liaoning Melbourne	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 88% Liaoning Melbourne	N. S. O. A. Total 83% Liaoning Melbourne
承受压力perform well under pressure	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 86% Liaoning 20% 33% 47% Melbourne 10% 53% 37%	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 79% Liaoning 55% 22% Melbourne 45% 35%	The majority of all students responding “Often”, with a similar balance for each group for “Sometimes” and “Always”.
收集相关工作信息g ather information	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 0% 77% Liaoning Melbourne	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 78% Liaoning Melbourne	The majority of all students responding “Often”, with a similar balance for each group for “Sometimes” and “Always”.
建立人际关系build relationships	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 0% 90% Liaoning Melbourne	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 80% Liaoning 35% Melbourne 45%	The majority of all students responding “Often”, with a similar balance for each group for “Sometimes” and “Always”.
了解所从事工作的 社会价值 see the value of their job outside the workplace	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 0% 78% 72% Liaoning Melbourne	N.I. S.I. Q.I. H.I. Total 78% 71% Liaoning Melbourne	N. S. O. A. Total 31% 42% 20% Liaoning Melbourne

## Appendix M Comparison of lecturers' results for the three contexts

Table 69 Summary of the lecturers' results for the employment, curriculum and teaching contexts

Skill / Attribute	Comment / feature of lecturer responses – EMPLOYMENT context	Comment / feature of lecturer responses – CURRICULUM context	Comment / feature of lecturer responses – TEACHING context
团队合作 work in teams	No lecturer said this was Not Important; 96% of all lecturers responded with Quite or Highly Important; 53% of non-VU responded Highly, 65% of VU	80% of all lecturers responded with Quite or Highly Important; 20% of non-VU responded Slightly, 6% of VU	No lecturer said this was Not At All encouraged; 85% of all lecturers responded with Often or Always; 23%, 53% and 23% of non-VU said Sometimes, Often or Always respectively compared with 0%, 65% and 35% of VU
思维敏捷 think quickly	No lecturer said this was Not Important; 83% of all lecturers responded with Quite or Highly; 52% and 28% of non-VU said Quite or Highly respectively compared with 71% and 18% of VU	76% of all lecturers thought this Slightly or Quite Important; 30% of non-VU said Slightly and 19% of VU; 43% of non-VU said Quite and 63% of VU	No lecturer said this was Not At All encouraged; 80% of all lecturers responded with Sometimes or Often; 28% and 52% of non-VU said Sometimes, or Often respectively compared with 18% and 65% of VU
表达个人观点 argue for what they think is right	79% of all lecturers thought this Slightly or Quite Important; 37% of non-VU said Slightly and 47% of VU; 23% of non-VU said Highly and 12% of VU	74% of all lecturers responded with Quite or Highly; the response patterns were similar between the 2 groups for each category	No lecturer said this was Not At All encouraged; 81% of all lecturers responded with Often or Always; 13% and 57% of non-VU said Sometimes, or Often respectively compared with 29% and 41% of VU
善于解决问题 solve problems	No lecturer said this was Not Important; 92% of all lecturers responded with Quite or Highly; 3%, 43% and 53% were the non-VU responses for Slightly, Quite and Highly respectively, for VU it was 18%, 71% and 12% respectively	No lecturer said this was Not Important; 87% of all lecturers responded with Quite or Highly; 33% and 53% of non-VU said Quite or Highly respectively compared with 47% and 41% of VU	79% of all lecturers responded with Often or Always; 40% of non-VU said Often compared with 29% of VU
考虑他人意见 consider other people's points of view	No lecturer said this was Not Important; 81% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 20% and 63% were the non-VU responses to these categories, 35% and 41% the VU responses	79% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; the response patterns were similar between the 2 groups for each category	No lecturer said this was Not At All encouraged; 81% of all lecturers responded with Sometimes or Often; 57% and 13% of non-VU said Often or Always respectively compared with 35% and 29% of VU

使用电脑处理一般性工作 use the computer for general office tasks	66% of all lecturer responses were Slightly or Quite; 37% and 30% for non-VU for the respective categories and 24% and 41% for VU	76% of all lecturer responses were Slightly or Quite; 10% and 14% for non-VU for Not and Highly, 0% and 24% for VU for the same categories	85% of all lecturers responded with Sometimes or Often; 53% and 30% of non-VU said Sometimes or Often respectively compared with 29% and 59% of VU
敢于做决定 make decisions	77% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 27%, 43% and 20% were the non-VU responses for Slightly, Quite and Highly respectively, for VU it was 59%, 29% and 0% respectively	83% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 7%, 37%, 47% and 10% were the non-VU responses for Not, Slightly, Quite and Highly respectively, for VU it was 17%, 47%, 35% and 0% respectively	89% of all lecturers responded with Sometimes or Often; 40% and 53% of non-VU said Sometimes or Often respectively compared with 65% and 18% of VU
书写报告 write reports	76% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 10%, 24% and 45% were the non-VU responses for Not, Slightly and Quite respectively, for VU it was 0%, 71% and 18% respectively	No lecturer said this was Not Important; 75% of all lecturers responded with Quite or Highly; 47% of non-VU said Quite compared with 59% of VU	79% of all lecturers responded with Often or Always; 13% of non-VU said Sometimes compared with 29% of VU
尊重同事 respect their colleagues	No lecturer said this was Not Important; 87% of all lecturers responded with Quite or Highly; the response patterns were similar between the 2 groups for each category	77% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 10%, 43%, 33% and 13% were the non-VU responses for Not, Slightly, Quite and Highly respectively, for VU it was 0%, 29%, 47% and 24% respectively	No lecturer said this was Not At All encouraged; 50% of all lecturers responded with Often; 30%, 53% and 17% of non-VU said Sometimes, Often or Always respectively compared with 18%, 41% and 41% of VU
应用所学知识 apply their knowledge	74% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 28% and 45% were the non-VU responses for Slightly and Quite respectively, for VU it was 12% and 59% respectively	85% of all lecturers responded with Quite or Highly; 57% of non-VU responded Quite, 47% of VU	No lecturer said this was Not At All encouraged; 92% of all lecturers responded with Often or Always; the response patterns were similar between the 2 groups for each category
运用中、英文交流 communicate in Chinese and English	No lecturer said this was Not Important; 83% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 45% and 38% were the non-VU responses to these categories, 29% and 53% the VU responses	77% of all lecturers responded with Quite or Highly; 27%, 53% and 17% were the non-VU responses for Slightly, Quite and Highly respectively, for VU it was 12%, 35% and 53% respectively	72% of all lecturers responded with Often or Always; 35% and 17% of non-VU said Sometimes, or Always respectively compared with 6% and 53% of VU
洞察和预见问题 notice problems and possibilities as they arise	75% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 27% of non-VU lecturers responded Highly, 18% of VU did	72% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 30% and 40% were the non-VU responses for Slightly and Quite respectively, for VU it was 53% and 24% respectively	81% of all lecturers responded with Sometimes or Often; 40% of non-VU said Often compared with 53% of VU

联系不同学科体系 make links between different subjects	85% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 52% and 17% were the non-VU responses for Slightly and Highly respectively, for VU it was 71% and 0% respectively	80% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 41% and 24% were the non-VU responses for Quite and Highly respectively, for VU it was 65% and 0% respectively	No lecturer said this was Not At All encouraged; 83% of all lecturers responded with Sometimes or Often; 37% and 23% of non-VU said Often or Always respectively compared with 59% and 6% of VU
区分工作重点 identify the most important tasks	77% of all lecturers responded with Quite or Highly; the response patterns were similar between the 2 groups for each category	85% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; the response patterns were similar between the 2 groups for each category	85% of all lecturers responded with Sometimes or Often; 53% of non-VU said Often compared with 69% of VU
具有独立创新的见解 come up with new ideas	74% of all lecturers responded with Quite or Highly; 30% and 40% of non-VU said Quite or Highly respectively compared with 59% and 24% of VU	77% of all lecturers responded with Quite or Highly; 13% of non-VU said Slightly compared with 24% of VU	No lecturer said this was Not At All encouraged; 62% of all lecturers responded with Often; the response patterns were similar between the 2 groups for each category
服从领导 follow directions without question	79% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 10%, 53%, 33% and 3% were the non-VU responses for Not, Slightly, Quite and Highly respectively, for VU it was 0%, 6%, 59% and 35% respectively	79% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 20%, 40% and 33% were the non-VU responses for Not, Slightly and Quite respectively, for VU it was 0%, 18% and 71% respectively	70% of all lecturers responded with Sometimes or Often; 30%, 43%, 27% and 0% of non-VU said Not at all, Sometimes, Often or Always respectively compared with 0%, 24%, 34% and 11% of VU
独立工作 work without supervision	77% of all lecturers responded with Quite or Highly; the response patterns were similar between the 2 groups for each category	77% of all lecturers responded with Quite or Highly; the response patterns were similar between the 2 groups for each category	No lecturer said this was Not At All encouraged; 87% of all lecturers responded with Often or Always; 40% and 47% of non-VU said Often or Always respectively compared with 65% and 24% of VU
激励他人 motivate others	70% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 30% and 37% were the non-VU responses for Slightly and Quite respectively, for VU it was 53% and 24% respectively	72% of all lecturers responded with Not or Slightly; 20% and 53% were the non-VU responses for Not and Slightly respectively, for VU it was 6% and 65% respectively	77% of all lecturers responded with Sometimes or Often; 20% and 30% of non-VU said Not at all or Sometimes respectively compared with 0% and 59% of VU
按期完成工作任务 complete tasks within a deadline	87% of all lecturers responded with Quite and Highly; 40% of non-VU lecturers responded Highly, 59% of VU did	No lecturer said this was Not Important; 89% of all lecturers responded with Quite or Highly; 63% and 27% of non-VU said Quite or Highly respectively compared with 47% and 41% of VU	89% of all lecturers responded with Often or Always; 43% and 47% of non-VU said Often or Always respectively compared with 29% and 59% of VU
承受压力	No lecturer said this was Not Important; 83% of all lecturers responded with Quite or Highly; 50% and 33% of non-VU said Quite	No lecturer said this was Not Important; 79% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 40% and 40% of non-VU said Slightly	No lecturer said this was Not At All encouraged; 81% of all lecturers responded with Sometimes or Often; 43% and 13% of

perform well under pressure	or Highly respectively compared with 71% and 12% of VU	and Quite respectively compared with 18% and 59% of VU	non-VU said Sometimes or Always respectively compared with 24% and 29% of VU
收集相关工作信息 gather information	79% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 10% of non-VU responses were Not Important, for VU it was 0%	82% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 33% and 40% of non-VU responses were Slightly and Quite, for VU it was 47% and 24%	83% of all lecturers responded with Sometimes or Often; the response patterns were similar between the 2 groups for each category
建立人际关系 build relationships	No lecturer said this was Not Important; 75% of all lecturers responded with Quite or Highly; 33%, 27% and 40% were the non-VU responses for Slightly, Quite and Highly respectively, for VU it was 12%, 59% and 29% respectively	72% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 43%, 37% and 13% were the non-VU responses for Slightly, Quite and Highly respectively, for VU it was 0%, 59% and 29% respectively	74% of all lecturers responded with Sometimes or Often; 13%, 47%, 33% and 7% of non-VU said Not at all, Sometimes, Often or Always respectively compared with 0%, 12%, 53% and 35% of VU
了解所从事工作的社会价值 see the value of their job outside the workplace	76% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 10% and 31% of non-VU responses were Not and Slightly, for VU it was 0% and 53%	74% of all lecturers responded with Slightly or Quite; 13%, 33%, 40% and 13% were the non-VU responses for Not, Slightly, Quite and Highly respectively, for VU it was 0%, 53%, 24% and 24% respectively	83% of all lecturers responded with Sometimes or Often; 40%, 37% and 17% of non-VU said Sometimes, Often or Always respectively compared with 24%, 71% and 6% of VU

## Appendix N Examples of organisations which fit the ownership models and size categories used in this research

Table 70 Representative organisations of employers interviewed and surveyed

Ownership model	Number of employees		
	Less than 20	Between 20 and 200	More than 200
Family owned and run, only in China	北京翰美广告有限公司Beijing heart & mind advertising co., ltd <a href="http://www.findgs.com/Company/2018934.html">http://www.findgs.com/Company/2018934.html</a>	Beijing Spirit Translation Co., Ltd <a href="http://bjspirit.com">http://bjspirit.com</a>	澳际 <a href="http://www.globeedu.com/">http://www.globeedu.com/</a>
Family owned and run, some overseas locations	北京新沪物资有限责任公司 Beijing Xinhua Materials Co., Ltd. <a href="http://www.waimaoqiye.com/YP/beijing/330209829414.html">http://www.waimaoqiye.com/YP/beijing/330209829414.html</a>	Omegatravel <a href="http://www.omegatravel.net">http://www.omegatravel.net</a>	Fotile <a href="http://www.fotile.com/english/list-329.html">http://www.fotile.com/english/list-329.html</a>  Lining <a href="http://intl.li-ning.com/">http://intl.li-ning.com/</a>
State owned enterprise	Not applicable	日信证券 Rising Securities <a href="http://www.rxzq.com.cn/rxzq/index.jsp">http://www.rxzq.com.cn/rxzq/index.jsp</a>	Liaoning Heavy Machinery Group Co., Ltd. <a href="http://www.china-sz.com/webs_e/sort_list.aspx?id=148">http://www.china-sz.com/webs_e/sort_list.aspx?id=148</a> Sinotrans <a href="http://www.sinotransbj.com/about.asp?MainID=1">http://www.sinotransbj.com/about.asp?MainID=1</a> Scotland Royal Bank <a href="http://www.rbs.co.uk/">http://www.rbs.co.uk/</a> China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) <a href="http://www.petrochina.com.cn/Ptr/About_PetroChina/Company_Profile/">http://www.petrochina.com.cn/Ptr/About_PetroChina/Company_Profile/</a> China Aviation Industry Corporation <a href="http://www.avic.com.cn/EN/coperate-profile.asp">http://www.avic.com.cn/EN/coperate-profile.asp</a> China Building Materials Academy <a href="http://www.cbma.com.cn/English/cn/01byjs/aboutus.htm">http://www.cbma.com.cn/English/cn/01byjs/aboutus.htm</a> China Electronics Corporation <a href="http://www.cec.com.cn/english/ce20.asp">http://www.cec.com.cn/english/ce20.asp</a> China Gaoxin Investment Group Corp. <a href="http://oa.gaoxin-china.com.cn/version2/index(eng2).htm">http://oa.gaoxin-china.com.cn/version2/index(eng2).htm</a>
Privately owned enterprise	北京安昌兴达有机玻璃有限公司 Beijing Anchang Xingda Organic	全球人力资源管理顾问 (北京) 有限公司 <a href="http://www.globalhrlink.com">www.globalhrlink.com</a>	Wellhope Agri-tech Co.Ltd <a href="http://www.wellhope-ag.com/hfmy/english/new/introduction/introduction.htm">http://www.wellhope-ag.com/hfmy/english/new/introduction/introduction.htm</a> SOHO China <a href="http://www.sohochina.com/">http://www.sohochina.com/</a> New Oriental Education & Technology Group

	<p>Glass Co., Ltd.  <a href="http://www.acxd.net/index.html">http://www.acxd.net/index.html</a></p> <p>China Commodity Net  <a href="http://ccn.mofcom.gov.cn/335389">http://ccn.mofcom.gov.cn/335389</a></p> <p>AC Capital Strategic Consulting  <a href="http://www.accapitalpr.com/en/purpose.htm">http://www.accapitalpr.com/en/purpose.htm</a></p>		<p><a href="http://www.neworiental.org/Portal0/default3198.htm">http://www.neworiental.org/Portal0/default3198.htm</a></p> <p>Hennes &amp; Mauritz <a href="http://www.hm.com/">http://www.hm.com/</a></p> <p>Waterstone <a href="http://www.waterstones.com/waterstonesweb/home.do">http://www.waterstones.com/waterstonesweb/home.do</a></p> <p>Hwa Wei <a href="http://www.huawei.com/">http://www.huawei.com/</a></p> <p>Hisense <a href="http://www.hisense.com/en/about/hspr/hsgr/">http://www.hisense.com/en/about/hspr/hsgr/</a></p>
International business organisation		<p>优利咨询 ( 上海 ) 有限公司  <a href="http://www.uniland.net.cn/">http://www.uniland.net.cn/</a></p> <p>GNS China  <a href="http://www.gnschina.com/aboutus.php">http://www.gnschina.com/aboutus.php</a></p>	<p>Tebian Electric Apparatus Stock Co., Ltd. (TBEA)  <a href="http://en.tbea.com.cn/Modules/AboutTBEA/Default.aspx">http://en.tbea.com.cn/Modules/AboutTBEA/Default.aspx</a></p> <p>Drager <a href="http://www.draeger.com/ST/internet/CN/cn/index.jsp">http://www.draeger.com/ST/internet/CN/cn/index.jsp</a></p>
Multinational business organisation	<p>China Crest  <a href="http://www.chinacrestprofessionals.com.cn/index.asp">http://www.chinacrestprofessionals.com.cn/index.asp</a></p>	Not applicable	<p>Haier <a href="http://www.haier.com/AboutHaier/CorporateCulture/index.asp">http://www.haier.com/AboutHaier/CorporateCulture/index.asp</a></p> <p>Mckinsey&amp;Company <a href="http://www.mckinsey.com/locations/greaterchina/">http://www.mckinsey.com/locations/greaterchina/</a></p> <p>Lenovo <a href="http://www.lenovo.com.cn/">http://www.lenovo.com.cn/</a></p> <p>Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Learning Technology  <a href="http://hmlt.hmco.com/index.php">http://hmlt.hmco.com/index.php</a></p> <p>HSBC <a href="http://www.hsbc.com.cn/1/2/">http://www.hsbc.com.cn/1/2/</a></p> <p>Inditex <a href="http://www.inditex.com/en/who_we_are/our_team">http://www.inditex.com/en/who_we_are/our_team</a></p> <p>SUNTECH <a href="http://www.suntech-power.com/">http://www.suntech-power.com/</a></p>



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