Chapter 14
Chinese Cultural Heritage: Influences on University Learning and Teaching

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Abstract This chapter first introduces the Chinese cultural heritage in relation to education, namely Confucianism, *Yi Jing* (The Book of Changes) and *Da Xue* (The Great Learning). It then discusses the author's own learning and teaching journeys in China and in Australia, as a case study, to demonstrate how the Chinese cultural heritage has been influencing his learning and teaching rationale, methods and practices in Australian universities. This chapter also offers three conceptual frameworks: (1) A 24/7 E-Learning 2.0 Framework; (2) A 6D Teaching Rationale Framework and (3) A 4D Improving Your Teaching Framework. These three frameworks should be integrated and function together in responding to the needs and challenges faced by university learning and teaching in the twenty-first century. In the 24/7 Elearning 2.0 Framework, there are seven key questions that should be asked when designing e-learning courses, and in addition, consideration should be given to the pedagogies to be used in guiding the e-learning process. In the heart of the 6D Teaching Rationale Framework, there are five key questions that should be asked is the student learning experience and outcomes, which is achieved by implementing and integrating five key aspects of teaching practices in relation to students: understanding, oversight, engagement and teacher-student relationships; setting clear learning aims and developing comprehensive learning contents; applying educational technology, e-learning and pedagogical methodologies; focusing on developing students graduate attributes and generic skills; and using assessment to effectively drive learning and achieve learning outcomes. The 4D Teaching Improvement Framework includes: effective lectures; differentiation in teaching; excellence in teaching; and applications for awards for excellence in teaching.

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14.1 Introduction

The migration of peoples from one country to another is a defining feature of globalisation and internationalisation. This is particularly the case in Australia where the first- or second- generation immigrants make up over 50 % of the country's population. Furthermore, up to 30 % of Australian university enrolments are international students and there is also a substantial proportion of students with bi-lingual or bi-cultural backgrounds. There is also a sizeable population of migrant academics, with me being one of them. Consequently, educational and cultural heritage impact significantly on university learning and teaching.

In this chapter I share my experience on learning and teaching in China and Australia. On reflection, it is clear that my Chinese educational and cultural heritage have influenced the shaping of my views on the value of education, my teaching philosophy, my teaching methodologies and the way I relate to students. Although written in the specific context of construction management, the educational philosophy, rationale, approaches and cultural influences articulated here will be applicable to other disciplines.

14.2 Chinese Cultural Heritage in Relation to Education

In China's five thousand years of history, perhaps the best known philosophy that has had a profound influence on education is Confucianism, i.e., the philosophy developed and implemented by Confucius, or Kong Fuzi or Master Kong in Chinese. Confucius developed a philosophy that emphasised compassion and respect at all levels of society and promoted education as a means to develop the mind and cultivate the character, so that harmony and peace through social and political morality and interpersonal behaviour could be achieved. Confucianism places great emphasis on the importance of education – it was through study, one could develop one's mind and character, both of which were important for professional success, the cultivation of morality and an understanding of ritual (McArthur 2011). Confucianism was primarily concerned with the human condition and viewed education of the mind and the cultivation of character as the key to creating successful relationships at all levels of society (McArthur 2011). The root of Confucianism consists of five attributes, which are "benevolence (*Ren*, 仁), righteousness (*Yi*, 义), propriety (*Li*, 礼), wisdom (*Zhi*, 智), faithfulness (*Xin*, 信)", duty to be loyal to the state and to people of higher status (*Zhong* 忠) and filial piety, the love of children for parents (*Xiao*, 孝). Here, benevolence (*Ren*) means a deep and sincere concern for the welfare of others, and Propriety (*Li*) applies to such everyday social acts as basic greetings to various members of our social world – family members, friends, teachers, employers, or government officials, as well as deceased family members (McArthur 2011). The other dimensions include *Zhi* (Wisdom), *Xin* (trustworthiness, or honesty) and *Zhong* (忠, duty to be loyal to the state and to people of higher status) and *Xiao* (孝, filial piety, the love of children for parents). Many virtues, such as loyalty,

filial piety, bravery, fairness, transparency, diligence are derived from it. The core philosophy of Confucianism emphasizes that people should treat each other with benevolence and righteousness, stressing courtesy and etiquette. Rites are based on the principles of benevolence, while the latter is the outward manifestation of the former (World Expo 2010).

Another important aspect of the Chinese culture is the capricious *Yin* and *Yang* in endless succession, which is recorded in the book *Yi Jing* (*The Book of Changes*). *Yi Jing* is based on the belief that all things on earth are in a constant state of flux and developing, with *Yin* and *Yang* (positive and negative, male and female, light and dark etc) as the basic components. The positions of *Yin* and *Yang* change capriciously and repeatedly. *Yin* and *Yang* are the core ideological elements and basic symbols of Chinese thought and culture. The fundamental spirit lies in the continuous process of generation in an endless succession. The generating process has no dominator for the endless course of creation, but entirely depends on nature. *Yi Jing* (*The Book of Changes*) says "as heaven's movement is ever vigorous, so must a gentleman ceaselessly strive. As earth is vast and grand, so must a gentleman embrace everything with virtue and tolerance". This saying emphasises the spirit of firmly forging ahead as well as the breadth of mind needed for leniency and forbearance (World Expo 2010).

Traditional Chinese culture reveres education with respect for self-cultivation through learning and pastoral teacher-student relationships (Marginson 2011a). Over 2,000 years ago, Confucius, in his book *Da Xue* (大学,The Great Learning) noted:

> Great Learning consists in manifesting and clearly displaying the illustrious, natural virtue that is given by the Heaven, so that men may be renewed and brought back to his original purity, and it does not stop till this is perfectly accomplished. Through the investigation of things, knowledge is perfected. With the perfection of knowledge, thoughts become sincere. With sincerity in thoughts, the heart is rectified. Through rightness in heart and mind, the self is cultivated and disciplined. When the self is disciplined, the family can be rightly regulated. When the family is rightly regulated, the state can be well-governed. (*Da Xue,* The Great Learning, cited in Tzu 1994)

Confucianism attaches great importance to learning, study and all aspects of relationship and socialization. Confucius assumed that everyone was educable, even perfectible, and that everyone needed educating, as he said, "to educate all despite their social status" and "to teach according to the student's characteristics" (Kavanagh 2011). Rooted deeply in the Chinese social system, all parents have very high expectations of the success of their children's learning. Chinese parents have been shown to be more likely than American parents to use (the threat of) punishment with their children (Kavanagh 2011).

The roles and duties of a teacher in traditional Chinese culture may be defined as "to propagate the doctrine (*Chuan Dao*, 传道), impart professional knowledge (*Shuo Ye*, 授业), and resolve doubts (*Jie Huo*, 解惑)" according to Han Yu, one of the most outstanding scholars and educators in the *Tang* Dynasty (Gao 1998). Teachers are viewed as models of good conduct and learning for students, or a model of both knowledge and morality (Watkins 2000). Confucius emphasized the

importance of the exemplary effects of teachers and said when the personal conduct of a man is upright, the people will be attentive even if he does not issue orders.

Good teachers should not only perform well in teaching and learning, but also in other aspects of their lives. Teachers should position themselves as models in both academic capability and conduct, both inside and outside the classroom, so that students may follow their lead and find the correct way in their learning and development, the so called "*Wei Ren Shi Biao*, 为人师表", which means a teacher being a role model for students. Further, the Chinese culture also emphasises severity in teaching, as it was historically quoted that "To teach without severity, is the teacher's laziness" according to the Chinese *Three Characters Classics* (三字经).

There is strong belief that effort leads to positive learning outcomes. Confucianism viewed study as largely involving hardship, diligence and perseverance, not enjoyment. A typical Chinese saying is "effort can compensate for a lack of ability" and "a slow bird should make an early start". Students were encouraged concurrently to think and seek knowledge: "seeking knowledge without thinking is labour lost; thinking without seeking knowledge is perilous". However, in the Chinese cultural heritage, studying implied careful, intensive reading and the depth of learning depended on the number of readings; therefore Chinese students tended to memorise the contents without gaining deep understanding of the actual meaning or development of practical skills. This means that traditionally, Chinese students tended to undertake surface learning rather than deep learning.

Student achievement in Confucian heritage society is determined by three factors: the comprehensive modernising state; society-wide competition and selection with ancient roots in the Chinese imperial examinations; and the bonds uniting the Confucian families (Marginson 2011b). Confucius viewed schooling as a way to educate government officials; so-called "*Xue Er You Ze Shi*" (学而优则士) which means the outstanding scholars may become or be appointed as officials. This led to the "*Ke Ju*" examination system, established in China in 606 AD, which was the national selection and examination system to select government officials. The "*Ke Ju*" (科举) examination system has three grades of credential with the most prestigious degree, the *Xiu Cai*, 秀才, or 'cultivated talent', assessing the candidate's broader learning (Marginson 2011a). The "one-chance" examination system is still in use in China for university entry and government official selections. Since then, schooling has become an 'official and glorious ladder' to success and encouraged many students and scholars from average and poor families to study diligently and consistently (Gao 1998). This is reflected by a typical Chinese saying "no one pays attention to your 10 years of hard-study; but you will be well known once you succeed". Consequently, Chinese students typically value learning as a moral duty and studying hard is regarded as a responsibility to the family (Lee 1996; Watkins 2000).

In China, parents and teachers expect high achievements of their children and students. The traditional aims of education are threefold (Moral, Intellectual and Physical, also called Three Good Students -三好学生) stated in descending order of importance. Education should achieve the development of these three aspects; its

aim is the perfection of the person (Kavanagh 2011). The ultimate aim for an intellectual, in the Chinese culture, influenced by Confucianism, is not limited in study alone; he should also be successful in being a human who achieved the five attributes – benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faithfulness, and in his bearing of himself and to make full use of his ability, personality and intelligence to do good for the state, society and the world at large. As *Da Xue* (i.e., The Great Learning) stated: "A man should discipline himself, after that he could regulate his family, then govern the state and finally lead the world in peace." In achieving such ultimate aims, the Chinese perceived teaching as including five aspects: knowledge delivery, exam preparation, ability development, attitude promotion and conduct guidance (Gao 1998).

14.3 My Learning Journey

14.3.1 "Thirsty for Knowledge"

Born and raised in a village in Guangdong Province, Southern China, I am the youngest in the family with one sister and two brothers. My father was a primary school teacher and my mother did not receive any schooling. It was not uncommon at that time for females to have no opportunity to study or gain formal education. In my early childhood, China was experiencing the Cultural Revolution. During this time, Confucianism was criticised and abandoned. Teachers and students, instead of going to school, were sent to work in the fields. Those who insisted that students should study in class were sent to "labour re-education camps". Regardless, I was "thirsty for knowledge" at that time probably influenced by my father, who has never stopped or given up learning throughout his life. In my memory, my father was always reading books and newspapers or practising Chinese calligraphy whenever he had time. I too, always wanted to learn, to read books and solve maths or physics problems. I also had a strong desire to be "the best of myself and the best in the class", and an inner determination and spirit of "never giving up".

Once the Cultural Revolution was over (in 1976), the Chinese government re-established the national examination system in all levels of education, particularly for university admission, which allowed rural students to progress and gain opportunities to enter high schools and universities away from their home-town with life-changing consequences. I was one of such students who, through preparing and participating in examinations, gained opportunities to study in a selective high school, college and university and then work in the "Special Economic Zone" Shenzhen City, which was established in 1979/1980 as an outcome of Deng Xiaoping's "Open Door" policy. Shenzhen is now a very modern city and ranked the 4th largest city in China after Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. I worked as a site engineer at the time in Shenzhen City and after 2½ years, I was

promoted to be Officer-in-Charge. At that time, such an opportunity and career prospect was considered an ideal dream job with a bright future for many young people of my age.

14.3.2 From a Cleaner to Professor

With an aspiration to "read thousands of books and travel thousands of miles" and "learn more, go further", I landed in Australia on 11 April 1990 with a student visa to study English for 6 months. But life was really tough at that time, because there were about 40,000 Chinese students arriving in Australia at the same time which made it extremely difficult to find a part-time job. I had no financial savings and I could not speak much English at all. After 1 month of studying English, I had to find a part-time job, to survive and gradually save money to go back to university for further study. During this time, I did several different jobs including cleaner, factory worker and shop assistant. However, even though life was tough, I persisted with studying English, spending all my time in local libraries and prepared for the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) test. While the IELTS results of my first attempt were below university entry requirement, I did not give up and obtained an average score of 6.0 the second time, which just met with the university entry requirements during that time. It was not until 1993 that I gained an opportunity to study at The University of New South Wales (UNSW). It was very challenging at the beginning since I had limited English and was not familiar with the Australian university education system or the teaching methods. However, I persisted, studied very hard, and gained a high distinction in the subject of Prestressed Concrete, which was the highest attainment in the class. I continued my study by enrolling in a PhD. During my PhD research, I published several papers and was a teaching tutor for a range of subjects. After gaining my PhD degree in October 1999 I was offered a lecturer position in the Faculty of Built Environment at The University of New South Wales and started my teaching life in 2000. Realising the importance of having knowledge in information technology (IT) for teaching, I enrolled in an IT course and obtained a Graduate Diploma in 2001, also from UNSW.

On reflection of my learning journeys in Australia and China, it is clear to me that while the education systems in Australia and China differ in many respects, two distinct differences stand out. One is the "self-independence for one's own study" in Australia where the majority of students leave campus once classes finish and study alone; whereas in China students generally study and live on campus, where they support and help each other in studies and life skill development, with support and guidance from teachers. In other words, it is self-dependent learning in Australia, while it is teacher-dependent and peer-supported learning in China. Another significant difference is in the scale and scope of assignments (assessment tasks); in China the scope of assignments is much smaller, while in Australia the scale and scope are much bigger and often relative to practical problems, which means requiring a broader spectrum of knowledge to answer the questions or solve the problems.

14.4 My Teaching Journey

Currently I am Professor and Chair of Building and Construction Management, and Fellow of the ANZSOG Institute for Governance at the University of Canberra and prior to this I was Associate Professor at the University of New South Wales, where I served for more than a decade in various capabilities including lecturer, senior lecturer, program director and research students director. Over the past 12 years, I have taught a range of different subjects at postgraduate and undergraduate levels.

My teaching has come a long way from struggling to manage classes, to being an innovative teacher receiving several awards including the UNSW Vice-Chancellor's Award for Teaching Excellence and Australian Institute of Building (AIB)'s Professional Excellence in Building Awards, as well as the UNSW Innovative Teaching and Educational Technology (ITET) Fellowship.

14.5 My Teaching Rationale and Approach

A key challenge in university learning and teaching from my experience includes development of students' attitude, knowledge and skills in a range of areas including the following: technical, critical, creative, analytical, reasoning, decision making, problem-solving, research, teamwork, comprehension, conceptualisation and application of theory into practice. These challenges collectively could be termed as ASK (Attitude, Skills and Knowledge) (Zou 2008a). Another major challenge is acknowledging and valuing students' diverse backgrounds, needs and expectations, and recognition of their prior knowledge and skills.

In responding to these challenges, it is important to develop one's teaching rationale and approach. In my case, the main objective of my teaching is to guide students' learning such that their learning experience is enriched and they achieve excellent learning outcomes in the most effective and efficient way. I see the teacher's roles and responsibilities in student learning are to "*propagate the doctrine (Chuan Dao), impart professional knowledge (Shuo Ye), and resolve doubts (Jie Huo)*" quoted from a traditional Chinese article "*On the Teacher*" by Han Yu, a famous educator and writer in the *Tang* Dynasty, as discussed above. Over the years, my teaching rationale has evolved and can be described as "student-centred and inspirational" which I will elaborate upon in the following sections.

14.5.1 Student-Centred

The formation of my "student-centred" teaching rationale is perhaps an integration of the Chinese educational cultural heritage and the Western's educational theories. I have combined the Chinese "teacher-dependent and peer-supported" learning (i.e., teacher takes the responsibility for students' learning) with the

Western's "self-independent" learning to become '*student-centred*' teaching rationale. A "*student centred*" approach involves a commitment to understanding students, engaging students and being responsive to individual student needs. With such a mindset, I always focus on who they are, what technical skills and life-long skills they should learn, what knowledge they should achieve, how I can help them to learn most effectively and efficiently and develop a positive attitude and moral values. I set clear learning aims and expected learning outcomes and develop comprehensive learning content for students. I also pay full attention to and draw on students' diverse cultural backgrounds and make good use of educational technologies to enhance student learning. Moreover, I use real-life and practical examples including site visits and case studies to enhance students' understanding of concepts, principles and techniques. Students have regarded me as "*genuinely interested in students doing well and learning as much as they can*"[1]

14.5.2 Inspirational

As discussed in the previous section, in Chinese culture, the teacher is viewed as a model of knowledge and conduct for students to follow and learn from. The teacher being a role model obviously will have an inspirational effect on the students. Being a role model is referred to as "*Wei Ren Shi Biao*" in Chinese. This is a requirement, which is of high standard, I set for myself.

Being *inspirational* means how, through my positive attitude towards learning and teaching, my belief in the value of education, and my behaviour (both in-class and outside-class), I can inspire, encourage and motivate students to learn to the best of their abilities. I express my belief in the value of education and the impact of education on one's life, and I use myself as an example, by explaining to students how learning has changed my life and learning has led to who I am now, and how I will continue my life-long learning journey, which is as described in *Yi Jing* (The Book of Changes) that "as the heaven's movement is ever vigorous, so must a gentleman ceaselessly strive. As the earth is vast and grand, so must a gentleman embrace everything with virtue and tolerance" (ibid).

I believe students, like everyone else, have great potential, as assumed by Confucius that everyone is educable and even perfectible. I demonstrate my interest and enthusiasm in teaching and encourage students to challenge me and to think critically and creatively aiming to develop their problem-solving and decision-making abilities and capacity to apply theories to real-life situations. As one student commented *The teaching style, during the lecture fills me with the confidence that I am on the right track in my learning in this subject….. And it is definitely going to help me fulfil my ultimate goal to serve this society.*[2]

[1] *UNSW CATEI (Course and Teaching Evaluation and Improvement) Survey, 2008.*

[2] *UNSW CATEI Survey, 2007.*

14.6 Classroom Practice

My classroom practice is multifaceted. I use a *traditional approach* i.e. I lecture in front of the class, explaining learning aims, expected learning outcomes, key learning contents – concepts, principles, techniques, and case studies. I pay special attention in my first lecture to explain and discuss *what* they will learn, *why* they should learn and *how* they should learn. I see this first lecture as the most important in communicating, developing and reaching common expectations of lecturer and students. I emphasise development in attitude, knowledge and skills. The relevance of their studies to their personal and professional life is clearly explained to motivate them to learn and achieve a higher level. In a typical lecture, questions (including not only *what*, but also *how, why* and *why not)* are frequently asked and group-based exercises are frequently employed. I also encourage students to find *alternative solutions* for problems. During lectures, particular attention is paid to maintaining students' attention and concentration using both verbal and non-verbal means of communication. A number of different innovative teaching methods are used to enrich and improve students' learning experience and outcomes. These are discussed below.

14.6.1 Developing Students' Teamwork Skills

Teamwork is one of the key skills students need to develop during their university studies. Group assignments are a common form of assessment task for developing teamwork skills. Influenced by the Chinese collectivism culture, I believe it is important for students to develop teamwork skills to work collaboratively with other people. However, students face difficulties in group assignments, particularly when students with different cultural backgrounds work together. To enhance students' learning in group assignments, I conducted research and organised "group dynamic and team learning" workshops with students and academic staff. From these, I developed a "*Guidelines for Group Assignments*" (Zou and Yang 2013). These guidelines include several chapters on subjects such as why we need to work in groups, how to work in groups, how to handle difficult situations and reflective learning. It also includes many forms for students to use to monitor the group assignment process and reflective learning. The guidelines have been used in my teaching and student learning since 2005 and were also used by the UNSW Foundation of University Learning and Teaching (FULT) Program which is a compulsory 5-day intensive course tailored for new academics at UNSW.

14.6.2 Curriculum and Application of Educational Technology

I hold a firm belief that it is important to design and develop comprehensive, meaningful and coherent curriculum and that students are given a body of core knowledge that they should learn although they are expected to extend their knowledge

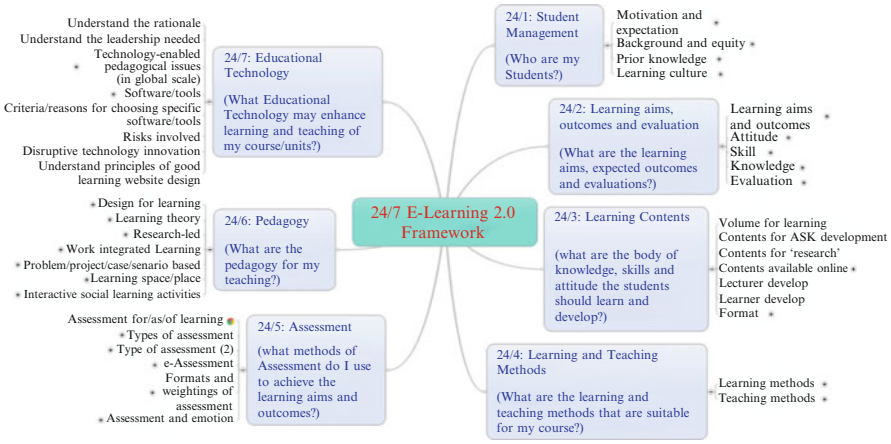

Fig. 14.1 A 24/7 E-Learning 2.0 Framework

beyond these core materials. I have been using course websites since 2000 and have developed websites for all courses I teach, using educational technologies in an innovative manner, including the use of computer animations, video clips, and e-learning modules that contain comprehensive learning content. A typical course website includes: a syllabus, learning resources, an online quiz, an online discussion forum, online communication tools, assignments, and grade/progress checking. The design of the e-learning modules is student centred whereby students' learning outcomes and learning effectiveness are emphasised. The e-learning modules include texts, photos, diagrams and computer animations as well as video clips. Online quizzes are used to enhance students' understanding. Online discussion forums are also used to help students' team learning.

Based on my knowledge, experience and research on e-learning (Zou 2007a), I developed a 24/7 E-learning 2.0 framework as shown in Fig. 14.1. This framework includes seven important aspects of e-learning and is presented in the form of seven key questions to be asked when designing/developing e-learning curricula. The name of the framework 24/7 implies 24/7 accessible learning. The framework also includes a [**+1**] component, which is often forgotten when designing eLearning modules or courses, that is the pedagogy that should be considered to guide e-learning.

14.6.3 Developing Students' Critical Thinking by Adapting Experiential Learning

In order to enhance students' understanding of construction processes, technologies as well as management issues, and to allow students to explore real life cases so that their learning is more relevant and practical, I organise students to visit construction

sites and invite experienced site personnel to give guest lectures. When students return to class, issues related to the site visit are discussed, in an effort to link the on-site practice to the principles and techniques taught in class. Students found these learning activities very effective. The on-site experiential learning also aims to provide opportunities for developing critical thinking in students. This is achieved by encouraging them to observe and reflect on practice at the site and compare the practice with theories discussed in the classes. They are also encouraged to critique the practice and to think of alternative solutions.

14.6.4 Research in Learning and Teaching

I have conducted research and published on a range of topics in learning and teaching, including graduate attributes, e-learning, group assignment and team learning, assessment and student satisfaction. On being asked why I was passionate about researching in learning and teaching, my answer was simple – "I want to help my students and improve my own teaching". On reflection I believe I have achieved these aims. Research in learning and teaching has helped me shift my mindset and mental model about university education, for example moving away from being teacher-centred to student-centred. Such research also allowed me to gain a deeper appreciation of Western culture and integrate my Chinese cultural heritage into my teaching practice. It is also through undertaking research in learning and teaching that I have improved my teaching capability, particularly in understanding and applying the pedagogies in my teaching practice and developing my teaching philosophy, rationale and methodology. Further, it has helped me to appreciate that students learn differently and different methods are appropriate for different cohorts of students, depending on their cultural and technical backgrounds and work experience.

14.6.5 Research-Based Collaborative Learning

In order to develop students' skills in research, teamwork, critical thinking, decision making and problem solving, I design a major component of the overall assessment tasks to be research based. The class is divided into groups and a specific topic is given to each group with specific requirements on submissions. Students are required to conduct in-depth research and submit a research report and to present their research findings to the class. These exercises allow for peer learning and improvement in both written and oral communication. To help students learn more and better in this process, I developed the guidelines for group assignments as discussed in the previous section.

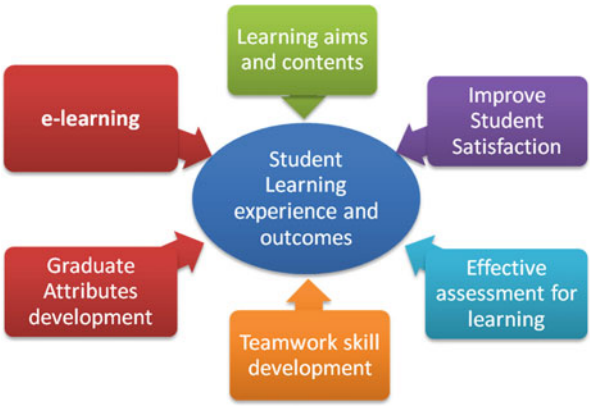

Fig. 14.2 A Six-Dimensional Teaching Rationale Framework

14.7 Summary of My Classroom Practice

Figure 14.2, which is a Six-Dimensional Teaching Rationale Framework, summaries the approaches and practice I have implemented. My approach began with writing comprehensive learning content followed by development of e-learning modules to meet the needs of new generation students who grew up with information technology (Zou 2007a, b; Zou and Wang 2011). With a belief that "students need to learn what to learn and how to learn", I developed and implemented strategies and guidelines to help students achieve "graduate attributes" (Zou et al. 2004; Zou 2008a) and to guide student learning in group settings and help them develop teamwork skills, I developed guidelines for group assignments (Zou and Yang 2013; Zou 2007a; Zou and Darvish 2006). Placing students at the centre of university education, I investigated ways to improve students' satisfaction (Forsythe and Zou 2006), and designed effective assessment strategies to drive student learning (Zou 2008b).

Reflecting on my teaching practice, there are obvious aspects that I have integrated from my Chinese cultural heritage. For example, the motivation to develop comprehensive semi-structured learning content was based on my understanding of China's nationwide standard textbook approaches. However, I find it difficult to identify which aspects of my practice were due to my Chinese cultural background and which were learned from Western culture. Instead I have integrated the two into one "Confucian-Socratic" approach, which was described by Tweed and Lehman (2002) as a flexible approach to learning that combines the strengths of both traditional approaches.

14.8 Teacher-Student Relationship

It is important to develop a good working relationship with students. In my view, teacher and student are two essential parties in the learning-teaching process, just similar to the Chinese "*Ying-Yang*" philosophy; one will not be able to exist without the existence of the other, and it is the interaction between the two parties that lead to

constant progressive learning and changes. I position myself as "their teacher and also their friend". As a teacher I try to command their respect so that I can implement certain rules to shape class behaviour and students' learning; as their friend, I seek to understand them and listen to them so that I can help them more effectively.

Further, I seek to learn from my students, following the Confucian saying "If three men are walking together, one of them is bound to be good enough to be my teacher" and "A student is not necessarily inferior to his teacher, nor is a teacher necessarily more virtuous and talented than his students. The fact is that one might have learned the doctrine earlier than the other, or might be a master in his own special field". This mentality allows me to appreciate that students are talented in their own right and own ways and there is much I learn from them, and their peers can learn from each other. Therefore I emphasise interactive teaching-learning and peer-learning, and provide opportunities for students to apply and build on their prior knowledge in their learning process. By doing so, the teacher–student relationship is also improved.

14.9 Developing Students' ASK (Attitude, Knowledge and Skill)

I developed and applied the ASK (Attitude, Skill, Knowledge) model to inform students what I require them (and also what they should aim) to learn, develop and achieve. Educating students to develop the right attitude is as important as teaching them the technical knowledge; I emphasise that having a positive attitude towards oneself, the people, the profession and the society as a whole will lead to positive outcomes. In addition to having a positive and supportive attitude, one should also develop and apply her/his knowledge and skills in their chosen professions and to society. This ASK model has similarities to the threefold characters of China's "Three Good Students" standard (i.e., Moral, Intellectual and Physical). In the Chinese "Moral, Intellectual and Physical Three Good Student" standard, the Moral component is comparable to the Attitude, and the Intellectual component is comparable to Knowledge; however the Chinese standard did not include Skill and instead it emphasised physical fitness and health. On the other hand, Western education focuses much more on skill development and not enough on Moral or Attitude. Combining the elements in the Chinese and Western education standards is the formation of the ASK model, which is an easy acronym that also means *ask* if you do not know the answer to a problem or question. This ASK model has been proved effective in guiding student learning (Zou 2008a).

14.10 Responding to Student Diversity

Positioning myself as "their teacher and also friend" allows me to gain a better understanding of the hardships and challenges students might have to face during their study. One particular challenge in today's university is to respond to student

diversity given the significant proportion of international students. Having been an international student myself, I am fully aware of the difficulties international students face particularly upon arrival. Therefore, I encourage them to talk with me. I often advise international students on ways to improve their English, with a particular emphasis on "*Thinking in English*". Further, students learn differently as a result of their differing educational backgrounds. Therefore at the beginning of a course, I conduct surveys to know who they are and where they are from. For example I conducted a survey in one of my postgraduate classes and found that 70 % of the class were international students from 13 countries. Their technical backgrounds were also very diverse, including architects, engineers, construction managers, cost estimators, material scientists, economists etc. I encourage students to view such diverse backgrounds in a positive way, i.e., as an opportunity to be tolerant and respectful, and to learn from each other, culturally and technically. For example, in group assignments, students form "multi-disciplinary" groups with members from different technical and cultural backgrounds. I also use the Confucian saying "If three men are walking together, one of them is bound to be good enough to be my teacher" to encourage students to learn from each other (i.e., peer-learning). Further, I draw on the students' prior knowledge and experience. The following student comments are illustrative: *(Patrick) treats students as friends; (Patrick's) enthusiasm and interaction with the students was really high. He loves to teach and share his knowledge and experience with the students.*[3]

14.11 Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the challenges in university learning and teaching, together with my rationale and approach for teaching, which have been informed by my Chinese cultural heritage and my understanding of Western culture. Upon reflection and summary of my journey of teaching and learning, I offer a simple **4D** Improving Your Teaching framework, as shown Fig. 14.3, which is self-explanatory. In this framework teaching involves Conducting Effective Lectures; Differentiating Your Teaching; the development of Excellence in Teaching and Applying for Awards for Excellence in Teaching. The process is cyclical with an aim of continual improvement; the underlining rationale similar to what has been said in *Yi Jing* (The Book of Changes).

I hope that my peers, particularly those of bi-cultural backgrounds, may draw inspiration from this chapter, so that they can develop their own way of integrating their cultural backgrounds into their teaching practice. For students, particularly international students, I hope they too, can understand the importance, value and impact of their study at university, and can learn to integrate their cultural backgrounds, *learn more, go further, be the best you can, and never give up* in this never-ending learning journey.

[3] *UNSW* CATEI Survey, 2006.

Fig. 14.3 A 4D Improving Your Teaching Framework

We now have a multipolar world in which Eastern and Western elements are shaping each other in a reciprocal process and we are witnessing continued culture-mixing (Marginson 2011). Given Australia is a country with people from more than 200 regions and countries, it is naturally a culturally rich country. The significance of integrating one's cultural heritage and background in his or her work will definitely benefit Australia's advancement. This is particularly important for university teachers and students, because university education is a critical factor in where a country's future lies.

To conclude, the way ahead is long; I see no ending, yet high and low I'll search with my will unbending: (路漫漫长修远兮,吾将上下而求索).

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