RESEARCH ARTICLE

Erroneous Learning from the West? A Narrative Analysis of Chinese MBA Cases Published in 1992, 1999 and 2003

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Abstract and Key Results

- The last two decades have witnessed an unprecedented transfer of Western management education theories and pedagogies into China and most Chinese MBA programs are now being modeled on their Western counterparts.
- To gauge the impact of this infusion of Western methods and theories on China's management educational system, we have conducted a narrative analysis of Chinese MBA teaching cases published before and after this transfer.
- The holistic approach to management, prevalent in early Chinese MBA cases and typical of traditional Chinese culture, has largely disappeared and Chinese cases now exhibit many of the same weaknesses and deficiencies that have been documented in Harvard Business School cases.

Keywords Narrative Analysis · MBA Cases · Learning · Management Education · Business Schools · Case Method

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Introduction

Seizing the learning advantages of a latecomer, China has made dramatic progress in the business education industry. Starting from nothing in 1980, China now boasts well over 122 MBA programs (Academic Degree Office of the State Council of China 2005), and one China-based business school has been ranked as high as 11th worldwide by the Financial Times Global MBA ranking (Financial Times 2008).

Much of the aforementioned progress has been made possible by learning from the successes of established business schools in the West[1]. Many MBA programs in China are staffed by faculty "borrowed" from partner schools in the West, with curriculum and pedagogy modeled after leading Western business schools, and teaching materials translated from popular textbooks and case studies from the West. The Chinese government has even specified that a minimum of 30 percent of Executive MBA courses must be taught by "international faculty", i.e., visiting faculty from leading business schools in the West. On top of this, 63 percent of China's own MBA faculty have obtained their degrees, or at least studied for some period of time at Western business schools (Wu/Gong 2001). According to statistics compiled from a leading business textbook publisher in China, the percentage of Western MBA textbooks translated into Chinese was nil before 1990, reaching 28 percent in 1999 and rising to as high as 71 percent in 2005. It is no overstatement to say that a massive inflow of Western management education theory and pedagogy has occurred in China.

Some of the most influential management scholars such as Ghoshal (2005), Mintzberg (2004), and Pfeffer and Fond (2002) have criticized conventional Western management education for having several important shortcomings. Bennis and O'Toole (2005) summarized the problem succinctly as "the failure to impart useful skills, the failure to prepare leaders, and the failure to instill norms of ethical behavior" (p. 1). Since learning is an experiential process of trial and error (Levitt/March 1988), there is a danger that China may have imported some of the deficiencies of the Western management education model during the learning process. Hence, certain questions inevitably arise: How does the inflow of Western management education programs and pedagogies impact the development of China's management education? To what extent can a developing country like China adopt the many positive and constructive elements of Western management education without simultaneously inheriting its problems and deficiencies?

In this paper, we will attempt to assess the impact of Western management education theories and pedagogies on China by focusing on one key element of management education: MBA teaching cases. The reason for this point of analysis is simple: The case method is centrally important to MBA teaching, and case studies are the cornerstone of that method (Hammond 1980, Lawrence 1953).

Each year, Harvard Business School distributes around seven million copies of MBA case studies, and business schools around the world teach using the case method (Garvin 2003). However, this teaching methodology is not without its critics. The case method has long been and continues to be a controversial teaching device. Criticisms of the method can be grouped into two categories. The first is related to the use of the case method as an educational pedagogy; the method helps students learn how to analyze complex problems, but does not teach the full complement of managerial skills. Garvin (2003)

drove this point home by quoting a second-year law student, "if you can 'think' like a lawyer, does that mean you can 'act' like a lawyer?" (p. 59). The second category of criticism addresses the content biases that are embedded in MBA/MPA teaching cases and their impact on MBA/MPA students. Many scholars are concerned that the "reality" depicted in the MBA/MPA cases might be distorted. Not only what students learn from cases analyses is insufficient for "acting" as a manager, but could be misleading and even harmful (Chetkovich/Kirp 2001, Swiercz/Ross 2003). Liang and Wang (2004) concluded that "there exists a major gap between the stated purpose of the case method of 'bringing a chunk of reality' into the classroom and what teaching cases actually depict and convey" (p. 410). Currie et al. (2005) found that some of the ECCH (European Case Clearing House) winner cases were "misleadingly incomplete" (p. 9).

Our study focuses on the content and framework biases of MBA teaching cases (to be discussed further in the literature review section). Building on earlier studies that documented the content biases in popular Western MBA/MPA cases, we ask a simple question: Are the Chinese MBA teaching cases written after the large scale infusion of Western management education models more truthful, or less so, in terms of representing the multifaceted reality of organizational life than those written before?

Part II of the paper reviews the introduction of Western management education programs and the case method into China, key arguments in the ongoing debate over the merits of the case method, and findings of extant studies on content and framework biases in popular MBA and MPA cases. Part III discusses our research method. Part IV presents research findings, followed by discussions of their managerial implications and a summary in Part V.

Literature Review

Noted Deficiencies in Western MBA Programs

Western management education, particularly the MBA program, is regarded by some leading scholars as having a number of critical shortcomings. According to Mintzberg (1996), the main problem with the typical MBA programs is that "they take people inexperienced in management practice and drill them in analytical decision-making; as a consequence, they graduate individual specialists, not collaborative managers" (p. 64). This problem is manifested in the case method where most MBA programs "take young people with little business experience… and drill them in case after case in which they play the great strategists sitting atop institutions they know nothing about" (Mintzberg 1996, p. 66). Related to the insufficient experiences of students is the weak relevance of the MBA curriculum. A survey of MBA graduates from 91 Western business schools conducted by the GMAT Council found a serious mismatch between what was important in business and what was taught in the classroom: "The ability to apply theories to practical situations is ranked seventh … in its importance for successful management but is ranked first … in the extent to which it is believed to be enhanced by the business school experience" (Stolzenberg et al. 1986, p. 13). By contrast, leadership, interpersonal skills, and wisdom, which are all crucial to business success, receive much less emphasis in MBA curriculum.

The employers complained about the poor interpersonal skills of MBA graduates, while the graduates themselves complained that the analysis-heavy program ill-prepared them for organizational politics in the real world (Merritt/Hazelwood 2003).

More fundamental questions have been raised recently. Clegg and Ross-Smith (2003) argued that modern management education had all but ignored the idea of a moral education. Giacalone (2004) questioned the materialistic foundation of MBA education. In a highly cited paper, Ghoshal (2005) challenged some of the most basic assumptions of mainstream economic and management theories, and criticized those "bad management theories" for "destroying good management practice."

Bennis and O'Toole (2005) posited that the underlying cause for all these problems was that business schools had wrongly adopted a "scientific model" rather than a "professional model." In the scientific model, business schools help society advance by pushing back the envelope of knowledge, but leave the teaching of practical application to others. In such a model, business schools hire professors trained in narrow disciplines, who in turn apply rigorous statistical analysis to quantifiable variables or conduct controlled experiments on human behavior. In such a system, non-quantifiable variables, such as morality and leadership, are often left out. As Bennis and O'Toole (2005) pointed out, when dealing with business, an essentially human activity in which judgments are made with messy, incomplete and often incoherent data, such "statistical and methodological wizardry can blind rather than illuminate" (p. 2).

The Introduction of Western-style MBA Programs and the Case Method into China

As a planned economy, China did not have any MBA programs until the 1980s. After the economic reform and "open door" policy was launched in 1980, several universities started to experiment with MBA programs on their own. Officially sanctioned experimentation began in 1990, when the Education Commission authorized nine selected universities to offer MBA degree. The following year, 105 students were admitted into Chinese programs. MBA education formally started on a national scale in 1994, with 1,364 MBA students admitted that year. Permission to grant MBA degrees offered by foreign university in cooperation with Chinese universities was first granted in 1995 (Academic Degree Office of State Council of China 1996). In 2002, the Ministry of Education took another major step by authorizing an additional 30 universities to offer part-time, executive MBA programs. Annual MBA enrollment in China is estimated to have reached 14624 by the end of 2007 (Tsinghua MBA Education Center 2007).

Along with the decision to introduce Western-style MBA programs into China, the Chinese government actively promoted the use of the case method. The first case method training session was organized by China's National Commission of Economic Affairs in the northeastern city of Dalian in 1986. *Management Case Research*, the first academic journal on case research in China, was launched in 1987. In 1997, China's National MBA Education Supervisory Board issued a document entitled "Fundamental Requirements for the Education of MBA Students", which made teaching by the case method an official requirement (Cheng et al. 1999). The document specified the number of cases that must be used in each of the MBA courses, depending on the nature of the specific subject. For example, Management Information System and Operation Management are only

required to use two cases, whereas marketing and strategy are required to use a minimum of five cases. To develop China-context specific cases that deal with unique issues in China's transitional economy, 27 Chinese universities/business schools have set up case research centers. According to official statistics published by the secretariat of China's MBA Education Supervisory Board, by 2001, 3,025 China-context cases had been developed, accounting for 56 percent of the MBA cases used in the 54 universities surveyed (Wu/Gong 2001, p. 22).

On the demand side, the case method is much welcomed by students and the business community in China. According to a study of MBA students in an elite Chinese university conducted by Thompson (2000), "the use of case teaching" was "unequivocally considered highly important" by Chinese MBA students and was rated as the second most important among ten pedagogical methods, only marginally lower than "small group discussion among classmates." According to survey data from China's National MBA Education Supervisory Board, a typical Chinese MBA program uses an average of 100 cases in its two-year curriculum, with about seven cases in each required core course. Of these, 56 percent are China-context cases developed by Chinese scholars (Wu/Gong 2001). As Table 1 below indicates, the number of cases used in China's MBA programs now far exceeds the minimum set by China's National MBA Education Supervisory Board, and the majority of them are Chinese-context cases written by Chinese scholars. In short, case methods and teaching cases have become just as important a vehicle in management education in China as they are in the West.

The Teaching Cases and Story Telling

The cornerstone of the case method is the teaching case. Lawrence (1953) described a case as "the vehicle by which a chunk of reality is brought into the classroom to be worked over by the class and instructor" (p. 215). By describing real business situations that capture the complexity of organizational life, the case method gives participants first-hand experience in the analysis and evaluation of business situations (Hammond 1980), and "forces students to grapple with exactly the kinds of decisions and dilemmas managers confront every day" (Harvard Business School 2005). Through the practice of analyzing hundreds of cases, students not only pick up tools for analyzing the business world but also develop mental models of that world. In other words, the cases convey not just "objective" facts, but also a particular set of implicit values or, as one HBS note about the case method puts it, management "philosophies" (Shapiro 1984).

Table 1. Number of Cases Used in Selected Course, in the 26 Universities Surveyed

Course Name	No. of Cases Used	Course Name	No. of Cases Used
Management	11.38	Human Resource Management	7.39
Strategy	10.65	Corporate Finance	6.58
Marketing	10.62	Accounting	6.46
Organizational Behavior	8.28	MIS	5.57
Managerial Economics	8	Applied Statistics	5.05
Production Management	7.86	Operation Research	4.12

To truthfully present the "real business situation" is, however, no easy task. A case is typically written in the third person as a narrative story. But stories are always interpretive accounts; and all interpretations are biased (Denzin 1989). Bruner (1984) made a useful distinction between a life as lived, a life as experienced, and a life as told: "A life as lived is what actually happens. A life as experienced consists of the images, feelings, sentiments, desires, thoughts, and meanings known to the person whose life it is … A life as told … is a narrative, influenced by the cultural conventions of telling, by the audience, and by the social context" (p. 5), and there are inevitable gaps between reality, experience, and expression (Bruner 1986).

Truthful representation of business reality is made even more difficult by the limited space allotted to a typical teaching case. The case writer has to be very selective as the story is constructed. In this regard, writing a case shares the same constraints as the writing of a biography, in that both are artful and selective endeavors that involve "a good deal of bold assertion and immodest neglect" (Maanen/Manning/Miller 1989, p. 5).

Dimensions of Organizational Life

Since the purpose of the case method is to bring into the classroom "a chunk of reality", which is complex and multi-faceted, it follows that teaching cases should present a balanced view of the many dimensions of the business world and life in organizations. The "truthfulness" or "objectivity" of teaching cases should be evaluated from multiple theoretical perspectives that collectively represent all fundamental aspects of organizational life.

One simple yet reasonably comprehensive model of the dimensions of organizational reality is Bolman and Deal (1991). Bolman and Deal (1984) identified four dimensions as essential to the understanding of organizations. Since its original publication in 1984, the Bolman and Deal model has been adopted and explored by a number of scholars (Bergquist 1992, Dunford 1992, Dunford/Palmer 1995, Ross 1998, Swiercz/Ross 2003, Liang/Wang 2004).These four different, but interrelated and partially overlapping domains (rational, human, political, and symbolic) are reviewed briefly below.

The Rational Domain. From the rational perspective, organizations are instruments designed to achieve specified goals. Organizations are "purposeful" in the sense that the activities and interactions of participants are centrally coordinated to achieve common objectives. Behaviors in organizations are rational in the sense that roles and role relations are prescribed independently of the personal attributes of the individuals involved (Scott 1992). In the rational domain, organizations are driven by strategies, and the role of management is to align strategies and structure with the external environment.

The Human Domain. People do not leave their emotions and feelings at home when they come to work in the morning, and non-economic objectives are pursued alongside economic objectives (Powell 1992). While people are intentionally rational, not all human behaviors are the result of rationality. Often the most important incentives in organizations are those of "a personal, non-materialistic character", and the very functioning of formal organizations "creates and requires informal organizations" (Barnard 1938, p. 120 and p. 145). Spindler (1994) used the term "psychological contract" to describe the

relationship between the individual and the organization. In the human domain, the central issue is how to integrate human needs with organizational rationality.

The Political Domain. From the political perspective, organizations are coalitions of diverse individuals and groups with enduring differences in values and preferences (Scott 1987). They are governed not by a single center, as assumed in the rational perspective, but by a dominant coalition of interest groups. As such, organizations often operate with unresolved conflicts in goals (March/Shapiro 1992). While the intensity and scope of organizational politics vary, they exist in virtually all organizations (Sussman et al. 2002, Ocasio 1994). From the human perspective, malfunctions arise from structural misalignment or from personal deficiencies; while, from the political perspective, divergent interests and resource scarcity inevitably turn organizations political.

The Symbolic Domain. Symbolism plays a critical role in human experience. In the rational domain, the point of life is choice. However, life in organizations is only partly concerned with making decisions (March/Olsen 1976). Decision-making is often an arena for symbolic actions. Many events and processes are more important for what is expressed than for what is produced (Bolman/Deal 1991). Seemingly insignificant rituals give meaning, and "meaning is the core of life" (March/Shapiro 1992, p. 290). From this perspective, the most critical task for a leader is not the making of strategic decisions, but the shaping and protection of company values (Selznick 1957).

The key features of the four-domain model are summarized in Table 2 below.

Known Biases in Teaching Cases

Extant studies show that MBA teaching cases are biased in their depiction of organizational reality. Using the four-domain framework reviewed above, Swiercz and Ross (2003) documented significant and pervasive biases in thirty-six best-selling Harvard Business School (HBS) cases. They found the HBS cases to be overwhelmingly rationalistic, executive-centric, instrumentalist (that people is only the instruments for achieving organizational goals and the primary purpose of management is to control people and circumstances to achieve an outcome) and objectivist (cases assume that there exists an objective reality "out there" waiting to be observed and recorded). Liang and Wang (2004) extended the Swiercz and Ross (2003) study and found Chinese cases published

Table 2. Overview of the Four-Domain Model

Domain	Rational/Structural	Human	Political	Symbolic
Metaphor for organization	Factory or Machine	Family	Jungle	Carnival, Temple, Theater
Central concept	Rules, Roles, Goals, Policies, Technology, Structure, Environment	Needs, Skills, Relationships	Power, Conflict, Competition, Organizational politics	Culture, Meaning, Ceremony, Stories, Heroes
Image of leadership	Social architecture	Empowerment	Advocacy	Inspiration
Basic leadership challenge	Attune structure to task, technology and environment	Align organizational and human needs	Develop agenda and power base	Create faith, beauty and meaning

Table 3. Key Findings of Extant Studies on MBA Cases

	Chetkovich and Kirp (2001)	Swiercz and Ross (2003)	Liang and Wang (2004)	Currie et al. (2005)
Sample	Ten best selling MPA cases of Kennedy School and ten other random MPA cases.	Thirty-six best selling HBS cases in the Spring of 1996.	Thirty-six best selling HBS cases studied by Swiercz and Ross (2003) and 30 popular Chinese MBA cases selected through a national competition.	Ten biggest sellers of ECCH, year by year, between 1995-2004.
Who are the main players/protagonists?	*High level lone protagonists beset by hostile political forces; Street level actors insignificant*	*Executive-centric:* Cases are written primarily from a senior management perspective. Presence and legitimacy of other perspectives ignored.	*Strategy-driven:* The entire organization can be reduced to a single strategist, usually the chief at the top and organizations is driven by strategic decisions at the top.	Mostly senior managers. "Ordinary workers' voice are conspicuously absent" in the sample.
What's the focal issue? What kind of information is presented?	Not conflict about the substance of policy, but an ethical dilemma between personal ethics and politics. *Information omitted more important than presented.*	*Rationalistic:* Rational materials dominate. Most case leave reader with a much clearer picture of the structure, technologies and industry than of the human, political or symbolic fabric of the organization.	*Rationalistic:* Although organizations are simultaneously rational, human, political and symbolic, the rational perspective is the dominant framework adopted in almost any single case.	Crises or turning points, where those at the helm have to make decision. Case information mostly comes from the company itself; 75 percent of the quotes are from management. Some case "remains misleadingly incomplete."
How are decisions made?	From the perspective of the protagonist; *collaborative problem solving is rare.*	*Instrumentalist:* Employees are instrument for organizational goals. Management's primary purpose is to control people and circumstances to achieve an outcome.	*Manager-as-analyst:* Present problem solving as an intellectual exercise and executives work as an analyst detached from operations.	
How important is the context?	Centers on individual behavior; *devoid of institutional and historical context.*		*Under-socialized:* Treat organizations as a mere tool for profit, while neglecting their social nature.	Depict managers as authors of their own destinies. Underplay wider environmental influences."
Value orientation	*Negative role assigned to politics;* pitting politics against analysts. Implicitly instructed students to prepare not for joint effort but for battle against policy makers.	*Objectivist:* Case situation is filtered through the perceptual and interpretive lenses of the case writer(s) and approved by the company but is presented as "objective, facts-only."	*Naive politics:* To depict organization as "politics-free;" problems come either from outside or from the lower level of the internal hierarchy, but almost never from within the executive suite.	Cases generally repeat the senior management view, neglect workplace issues and attitudes.

in 1999 had similar biases: They were rationalistic in framework, centered on the CEO, obsessed with strategy, under-socialized, detached in decision making, with questionable neutrality. Chetkovich and Kirp (2001) studied the ten best-selling public policy cases in the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. They found that those tended to feature high-level, lone protagonists beset by hostile political forces. In these cases, collaborative problem-solving is rare and social and institutional contexts are of minimal importance. Identifying these implicit frameworks in the MBA teaching cases is important because they are likely to influence how MBA students perceive and conceptualize the business world, and some of the frameworks or mental models may be at odds with the stated goals of MBA education. Currie et al. (2005) examined the ten biggest European Case Clearing House (ECCH) sellers from 1995 to 2004 and reached similar conclusions. Table 3 summarizes key findings of extant studies of the content and framework biases in MBA/MPA cases.

Methodology

The brief review above suggests that if the purpose of the case method is to bring "the reality" of the organizational life into the MBA classroom, all the four dimensions of organizational life (rational, human, political and symbolic) should be adequately represented in teaching cases, although not necessarily in every single case. Our research question then becomes: Have Western influences made the writing of Chinese cases more or less balanced as far as the four dimensions are concerned?

To answer this question, we first conducted content and narrative analysis of Chinese MBA cases published before and after the large scale infusion of management education theories and pedagogies from the West. We then juxtaposed and compared the content of these "pre- and post-Western infusion" samples to identify the changes that had taken place in Chinese MBA cases. Finally, we evaluated these changes against the generally-accepted goals of management education and discussed their implications.

Content and Narrative Analyses

Content analysis is a technique that makes inferences by "systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages" (Holsti 1969). In this research, we applied content analysis to code each and every paragraph of the cases into their respective domains (R, H, P, and S) to examine how the four dimensions are balanced in MBA teaching cases.

Narrative analysis seeks to uncover underlying patterns in narratives (Bernard 2000, Denzin 1989). A narrative is an analytic construct that unifies a group of events into a single story (Graffin 1993), and storytelling is how we make sense of our environment (Lissack/Richardson 2003). By analyzing how events are integrated and sequenced into a story and what narrative choices are made along the way, narrative analysis can generate insights about organizational life in terms of culture, processes, strategies, and member identities (e.g., Barry/Elmes 1997, Boje 1991, Gephart 1991). It has been used in the studies of organizational decisions and actions (Mitroff/Kilmann 1977, Martin 1982,

O'Connor 1997), organizational change process (Stevenson/Greenberg 1998), dynamics of environmental movements (Campbell 2002), sense-making after tragic events (Dubnick 2002), and symbolic meanings hidden beneath the surface in CEO letters to shareholders (Prasad/Mir 2002). Beech (2006) analyzed the narrative of 140 MBA brochures and found that "intense, vigorous, soft and fun" is the image projected by most international MBA programs.

The Samples

Two samples of Chinese MBA cases are selected for this study: One for those written before the large scale infusion of Western management education programs and pedagogies, and the other for those written afterwards (henceforth "pre-West" and "post-West"). We choose 1994 as the dividing point and considered all cases published before 1994 "pre-West" and those afterwards, "post-West." The designation of the after-1994 years as "post-West" is somewhat arbitrary, as China's opening up has been a gradual process. It is defensible in the sense that China's MBA education officially started on a nationwide scale in 1994, from which point on, the introduction of Western management education and MBA teaching materials accelerated dramatically.

Because the difficulty of enforcing copyrights of individual cases, most Chinese MBA teaching cases are sold as casebooks. By searching relevant databases, we identified a total of 317 Chinese casebooks published by the 25 leading publishers. To ensure a balanced representation of Chinese cases, we eliminated those casebooks that were edited by a single editor, or an editorial team from a single university, and concentrated our effort on casebooks with a national editorial team.

Only three casebooks were published before 1994. Among the three, we selected a 1992 casebook (Yu 1992) as our sample of "Pre-West" Chinese cases. This book was edited by an 18-member editorial board, each from a major university/training center in a different province, and was headed by the president of China's Case Research Association. It contains 105 cases in seventeen sections, each corresponding to a particular management training course. After detailed examination, 48 cases were excluded on the ground that they were not "description(s) of a chunk of reality" but simply demonstrations of how to apply analytical tools such as breakeven analysis and capital budgeting analysis. The remaining 57 cases constitute our sample for "pre-West" Chinese cases, covering issues practicing Chinese managers faced in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Those 57 "pre-West" cases were written by 63 different authors; most of them were faculty member of local polytechnic universities and management training centers that were set up by provincial level governments, because there were no business schools in China at that time. As such, most of the early case writers did not have formal training in modern management theories nor had they had much exposure to conventional MBA programs in the West.

The choice of "post-West" Chinese cases was more complicated. Our initial choice was the first volume of a casebook series published in 1999, entitled "Contemporary Chinese Management Cases" (Cheng et al. 1999). The book was the outcome of China's first national effort funded by China's Natural Science Foundation[2] (NSF) to develop

indigenous teaching cases. The thirty cases in this book are among the first indigenous cases that were written specifically for MBA programs in China.

Although this casebook is well known and many of its cases are still in use today, it has become a bit dated and may not be representative of "post-West" cases written more recently. Upon the recommendation of an anonymous reviewer, we added 47 more recent cases by including Volumes II and III of the "Contemporary Chinese Management Cases," both published in 2003 (Cheng/Chen/Xiao 2003, Cheng/Chen/Chen 2003). Like its Volume I published in 1999, the two 2003 subsequent volumes were also funded by NSF, and were edited by a national level editorial board. Although more Chinese case-books have been published since 2003, they have been edited either by a single editor or an editorial team from a single school, and are thus not as nationally representative as the two books published in 2003.

Altogether, our "post-West" sample of the three volumes of "Contemporary Chinese Management Cases" contains a total of 77 Chinese cases written between 1997 and 2003; they cover a wide range of business issues in enterprises that vary in size, sector, region, and ownership. The 1999 and 2003 cases are very similar to each other in terms of topics and format; with the only major difference being that the latter included four internet-related cases. These 77 cases were written by 121 Chinese authors and one foreign author, most of them consisting of business school faculty members and case research center case writers. They are heavily exposed to Western MBA education programs and some of them received short term training in Western business schools.

Data Analysis

Following Swiercz and Ross (2003) and Liang and Wang (2004), we selected natural paragraphs, as compared to sentences or cases, as the unit of analysis in the content ana-lysis stage, because the meaning and perspective of a case is typically expressed in indi-vidual paragraphs. We also adopted Liang and Wang's coding guidelines and followed the same coding procedures. Using the key words listed in Table 4 as guidelines, we coded each paragraph based on its respective domain(s). If more than one perspective was noted in a paragraph, the multiple categories present would be recorded accordingly. Since one paragraph can be coded into multiple categories, the total percentages of the four catego-ries recorded may be greater than 100 percent.

To mitigate the potential single-rater bias, the two of us conducted the coding sepa-rately. Our two-phase coding process began with a pilot study in which we each coded three sample Chinese cases to clarify our own understanding of the coding categories. We each kept detailed coding notes of these three cases, then compared our results to discuss any disagreements or ambiguities we encountered. We then used the rules developed in the pilot study to guide the coding of the rest of the cases. For example, in the pilot study, we found that sometimes a natural paragraph served as purely a linguistic function to introduce the contents of the next paragraph (such as "Mr. X then made the following comments"), which really should not be coded into any of the four RHPS domains. We decided to code such paragraphs as "C" for "connecting device" and excluded them in the calculation of coding statistics.

Table 4. Key Words of Organizational Domain

Rational	Human	Political	Symbolic
Analysis	Appreciation	Bargaining	Belief
Bureaucratic	Aspiration	Coalition	Commitment
Structure	Attitude	Conflict	Culture
Chain of control	Competency	Diversity of interests	Climate
Compensation	Creativity	Fairness	Drama
Consistent	Desire	Gray area of unstated	Ethics
Efficiency	Guanxi (social	authority	Euphemisms
Facts	connection)	Influence	Faith
Formalization	Emotion	Inner circle	Habit
Functional work units	Expectation	Jockeying	Humor
Goal specification	Experience	Legal action/reaction	Ideals
Guide	Face (mianzi)	Negotiation	Interpretation
Logic/Logical path	Feelings	Nuance	Kinship ties
Measurement	Individual behavior	Party activities	Meanings
Mechanical	Informal groups	Political climate	Metaphors
Model	Interpersonal skills	Policies	Moral
Order	Intuition	Power	Myth/stories
Optimization	Loyalty	Public opinion	Norm
Precision	Motivate	Rumor	Philosophy
Prediction	Personality	Social responsibility	Play
Procedure	Personal	Trade-offs	Reputation
Regulations/Rules	Relationships	Threats	Ritual/ceremony
Routine	Recognition	Government interference	Rites
Scientific decision-	Skills	Agency Behavior	Gala
making process	Teams	Bribery	Value
Sequential	Team spirit		Vision
Technologies	Training		Tacit knowledge
Information			Tradition
Standards			Spirituality
			Capitalism
			Socialism
			Equity
			Harmony

After developing a common understanding of the coding categories, we each procee-
ded to code the rest of the Chinese cases independently. We numbered every paragraph
in a case, and coded it into a corresponding category. Once we had both finished our
coding, we met to compare the results and calculated our inter-rater agreement. Using
the Kappa coefficient as the measure, our initial inter-rater agreement was 83 percent for
the 1992 sample, and 80 percent for the 1999/2003 sample. For those paragraphs where
our results differed, we jointly decided what code should be assigned. This is an iterative
process. On a few occasions, our discussions identified gaps in our initial understanding
and forced us to go back to the original Bolman-Deal book to gain a better understanding
of the subtle differences among the four perspectives. For example, in one of the discus-
sions, we found that we coded differently those paragraphs where the pros and cons of
communism/socialism versus capitalism were debated. One of us interpreted these as a
discussion of political systems and coded it as "P" in the political domain; the other inter-
preted these as a discussion of ideology and coded them as "S" in the symbolic domain.

We re-read the relevant chapters in the Bolman-Deal book, decided to code such paragraphs "S", and recoded all relevant cases.

After the coding phase, we examined the cases narrative patterns by asking: Who is the narrator, and from whose perspective is the story told? What are the issues discussed, and what issues are left out? What are the implicit leadership roles and decision models? How is the social and historical context presented? How are ethical, moral and political issues dealt with in each of the cases? All are important questions because their answers may signal to MBA students what problems they are likely to face in their future work, where to focus their attention, and from whose perspective to frame relevant issues.

After all the paragraphs were coded and all the narrative patterns analyzed, we then proceeded to search cross-case patterns and themes (Eisenhardt 1989). We re-read all 134 cases numerous times, jotting down any unique or unusual points on the page margin and writing the key issues discussed and the dominant framework(s) of the entire case on the respective case title pages. Once we identified a tentative pattern in a few cases, we went over the entire case portfolio to see if it was indeed a feature shared by many other cases.

After tentative cross-case patterns were identified, we went back to the literature for interpretations. We compared these patterns with a wide spectrum of theories by asking "What is this similar to? What does it contradict? And why?" (Eisenhardt 1989). In this process, we relied on writings of leading scholars in organizational theories and decision making (Williamson 1990, Zey 1992, Smith/Hitt 2003), and comprehensive reviews of extant studies on applicability of management theories to developing countries (for example, Hafsi/Farashahi 2005, Tsui et al. 2004, Kirkman/Lowe/Gibson 2006). The findings reported below are the results of this iterative process.

Findings

In this section, we report our findings on the overall balance in case orientations, and, in more detail, on the five patterns of changes between the two samples.

Overall Balance: Dominated by the Rational Perspective

Table 5 presents the coding results in the four domains: Rational, human, political and symbolic. The second column is the coding results of the "pre-West" 1992 sample; on columns 3 and 4, the coding results of 1999 and 2003 cases of the post-West sample. By examining the coding results of 1992, 1999, and 2003 cases, we may be able to detect any trends over time. Column 5 lists the coding results of the combined 1999/2003 cases. For reference purposes, we also included on the sixth column the Swiercz and Ross (2003) coding results of the HBS cases.

The above coding results show that there are major differences in case orientations between the "pre-West" (1992) and "post-West" (1999/2003) samples. As shown in Table 5, the "R" domain perspective, more or less balanced by H, P, S, domains concerns in the 1992 sample, becomes overwhelmingly dominant in the 1999/2003 sample. Using case paragraph as our measure unit, "R" domain coverage rises from 55 percent in the 1992

Table 5. Orientation of Chinese Cases Published in 1992, 1999 and 2003

Coding Category	Chinese Cases 1992	Chinese Cases 1999	Chinese Cases 2003	Chinese Cases 1999/2003 combined	HBS Cases Coded by Swiercz and Ross (1998)
R	55%	76%	91%	83%	97%
H	40%	31%	13%	22%	53%
P	27%	28%	15%	21%	4%
S	15%	8%	2%	5%	9%
No. of Units	1075	1659	1724	3383	2872
No. of cases	57	30	47	77	36
Units/ per case	19	55	37	44	80

sample to 76 percent in the 1999 sample, finally reaching 91 percent in the 2003 sample, or 83 percent in the combined "post-West" sample. Contents in the "H" domain, second highest in the 1992 sample, shrink from 40 percent in 1992 to 31 percent in 1999, and to 13 percent in 2003 cases. Decline in the coverage of the "S" domain is also evident, from 15 percent to 8 percent and 2 percent. Overall, the 1999/2003 sample exhibits an orientation pattern that is broadly similar to that of the HBS cases. In fact, the percentage of paragraphs with the "R" perspective in the 2003 sample (91 percent) is almost as high as that in the HBS sample (97 percent). We next discuss the five patterns of changes that have given rise to these coding results.

Case Protagonist: From Multi-Angled to CEO-Centered

The case protagonists are the characters with whom readers most readily identify and whose roles are adopted by students during class discussion (Chetkovich/Kirp 2001). The choice of case protagonists is important because it is through this that organizational "reality" is presented in teaching cases. Juxtaposing the 1992 and 1999/2003 cases, it is apparent that case protagonists have changed in the two samples. While most 1992 cases were multi-angled, most 1999/2003 cases were CEO-centered.

On the whole, the 1992 cases feature both managers and the managed. Among the fifty-seven 1992 cases, eighteen of them involve at least four levels of protagonists, including CEOs or general managers, middle managers, front line supervisors, and floor workers. Only 16 percent of the 1992 cases have senior executives as the sole protagonist. The 1999/2003 cases, on the contrary, have an overwhelming presence of top executives. Among the 1999/2003 cases written with a personalized story teller, 71 percent of them have senior executives as the main protagonist. The flip side of that coin is that floor workers are featured much more prominently in the pre-West 1992 cases (54 percent of the sample) than they are in the post-West 1999/2003 cases (only in 6 percent of the sample).

This transition is further supported by analysis of direct quotations in the respective cases. Of the 317 quotes in the 1992 case sample, 40 percent are from senior executives (CEOs, VPs, general managers, et seq.), 22 percent from other managers, and 37 percent from employees. Quotes in 1999/2003 cases, however, have a markedly different distri-

bution. Among the 142 quotes in the 1999/2003 sample, 58 percent are from senior executives, 37 percent from middle managers; and only 7 percent from front line employees.

Another salient change is the way senior executives are portrayed. The 1992 cases, in general, portray senior executives as ordinary human beings. They strive to do their best, but are "bounded" in their rationality, and, not without personal deficiencies. The 1992 case "How to End This Fraud Case" describes the protagonist, Mr. Liu Chaojian, this way:

> "… During his first year as general manager, none of his well-thought-out reform measures worked … As the situation became desperate, he made a last resort gamble. He borrowed 300,000 RMB from his relatives and signed a comprehensive 'responsibility contract' with the authority, which made him personally responsible for the profits and losses of the factory. The effect of this change was dramatic; revenue went up from half a million a year to half a million a month, and the factory became profitable three months after he signed the 'responsibility contract'. By the end of year 2, the factory made a net profit of 200,000 RMB … and its products enjoyed a virtual 'seller's market' … The good times, however, did not last long. The factory seemed to run into a sea of bad luck … At the beginning of year 3, Mr. Liu made a large purchase of raw materials worth more than 1 million RMB, betting on the price to go up. But the price fell by mid year and he lost hundreds of thousand RMB. To make the situation worse … one of the newly purchased expensive pieces of equipment simply did not work, even after half-a-year's fine tuning. He was frustrated and bitter, but could not blame anyone else, as it was he that selected and ordered this equipment."

The case then went on to describe the focal issue facing Mr. Liu in the case, in which Mr. Liu's misplaced trust in a personal friend led to a loss of 800,000 RMB. Similarly, most senior executives depicted in 1992 cases come with both strengths and weaknesses. For example, the case "A Turbulent Episode in Hongwei Chemical Instrument Factory" depicts the factory general manager, Mr. Zhang Huaizhi in the following manner:

> "Mr. Zhang, the factory general manager, is indeed a good man. He is hardworking, diligent, honest and upright. Everyday, he is the first to arrive and the last to leave the factory. He even sacrifices time with his family to work overtime. However, his work style is too simplistic and unwise. He is discourteously blunt, opinionated and is quick to scold his employees … Under his leadership, there would be no tinge of the human touch" (1992 Case: A Turbulent Episode in Hongwei Chemical Instrument Factory).

The case of "The Phenomenon of 'Abusive Wang'" is another example:

> "It's no exaggeration to say that Mr. Yi Wang works like a horse. He is just like a perpetual motion machine. Since becoming general manager four to five years ago, not once has he taken a rest for a whole Sunday. To him, being over laden with work is just routine …"

The same case, however, also described another side of him.

> "In the factory, he hardly smiles. He is always arrogant and indifferent to others … Upon seeing work that was only slightly unsatisfactory, he would fly into a rage" … 'Shut up' and 'I'll kick you out' have become his two tags" … "In operation, only he himself

has the final say, turning a deaf ear to whatever is said by others" (1992 Case: The Phenomenon of "Abusive Wang").

Portraits of case senior executives in the 1999/2003 sample, however, are quite different. In these, the executives are typically presented as the masters of their universe, their weaknesses or limitations are rarely mentioned. Among the seventy-seven cases, fourteen of them depict top managers as "superman" type heroes. According to these cases, top executives have exceptional foresight, extraordinary will, unparalleled talents, and make virtually no mistakes. For example, the 1999 case "Xin Hongguan Group" begins with this statement:

"To know Xin Hongguan Corporation, you have to get to know the 30-year-old President Xie Guanglin. … Xin Hongguang Corporation was created single-handedly by Mr. Xie … The success of Xin Hongguang would have been impossible without Mr. Xie's wisdom, personality and leadership. In a sense, the company is a mirror of Mr. Xie himself … Rich personal experiences have made this man broad in perspective, shrewd in investment judgment and resolute in work style. A lot of nice words fit him well: Energetic, optimistic, courageous, thoughtful, imaginative, and innovative. Failure can only make him even more experienced."

Another case describes the general manager, Mr. Zhou Jinxuan this way:

"His eyes project power and confidence. Regardless of the occasion, he's always highly confident and his talk is well-thought-out. There is something about him that makes it so easy for him to move and call upon others. People trust him and willingly follow him" (1999 case: Shenyang Ventilation Equipment Corporation).

Similar cases can also be found in the 2003 sample:

"Mr. You did not have much education, and had maybe not even graduated from junior middle school, but he was extraordinarily smart … Mr. You had a natural talent in colors and designs, and a unique ability to sense the trends in the arts market, seeing new perspectives that other could not … He had the courage to innovate, the foresight to lead the trend, and a graceful style … His business was so good that it made him the envy of many people" (2003 case: Mr. You and His Family Business).

Below is another example in the 2003 sample:

"The success of Xinghu seasoning company cannot be separated from the efforts and devotion of its chairperson and general manager, Mr. Huang. Mr. Huang is a senior engineer who has devoted his entire life and wisdom to the motherland … Huang is not only a top scientist, but also an outstanding entrepreneur … Huang carries his scientific spirit of perfectionism into his management practice and never stops seeking further improvement … His scientific decision-making approach has ensured the orderly growth of Xinghu … he is respected and trusted by all workers at every level of Xinghu" (2003 case: Xinghu Seasoning Corporation).

In short, the case protagonists in the two samples have changed. Instead of presenting management problems from multiple angles and voicing the concerns of many stakeholders, the post-West cases are written primarily from the CEO's perspective. The

majority of the case protagonists in the 1999/2003 cases are CEOs/senior executives, who are presented as powerful super heroes, instead of "ordinary human beings" as the 1992 cases did.

Focal Issues: From All Dilemmas to Strategy-Obsessed

Consistent with the shift to a CEO-centered orientation, the focal issues in the pre- and post-West case samples have also changed. In the pre-West cases, managerial dilemmas in all domains are addressed; in the post-West cases, rational domain issues are dominant.

Similar to their Western counterparts, the post-West Chinese cases tend to focus on strategic issues at the top of the organization. These cases typically begin with an overview that is predominantly rational, framing the issue as how to achieve organizational goals in the face of adverse environmental changes, followed by a briefing on the relevant market situation and company profile, ending with a call for a strategic decision. The Xinlin case opens with this paragraph:

"Although Xinlin Group has weathered the dangerous period and survived the downturn, the road ahead is still full of uncertainties. On top of the increasingly sluggish demand in domestic and Southeast Asian markets devastated by the Asian financial crises, several foreign rivals have established beachheads in China and are expanding fast … How to compete with these multinationals is the major problem confronting Xinlin."

After introducing the industry structure and market trends, the case ends with a call for a strategic decision:

"The most critical of all now is to develop a three-year plan, because each of the alternatives being considered … will lead the company down a very different path. With competition intensifying each passing day, Xinlin has to decide on its strategic direction" (1999 case: Xinlin Group).

Similar focus can be found in many other cases in the post-West sample. For example:

"With the coming of the internet and the digital age, the ground of the commercial banking industry of the last three hundred years has shifted, irreversibly. The CEO of Microsoft, Bill Gates even predicted that commercial bank as the dinosaur that will extinct in the 21st century … Faced with this unprecedented crisis in the commercial banking industry history, Ma Weihua's (president of the bank) mind plunged deeply into the question, 'where is the way out?' " (2003 case: Challenge the Dinosaur Fate).
"At the board meeting, Mr. Li Zhi was asked to develop a marketing strategy … In the last few years, because of the millions of dollars that foreign-based multinational firms have poured into their marketing efforts in China and the rampant flood of films smuggled into China from abroad, Le Kai Film's market share has declined from 35 percent in 1991 to 19 percent in 1996. The company's very survival is now at stake" (1999 case: Lekai Film Corporation).

"After carefully considering various factors, Mr. Gu Hua knew he had to develop a plan ... Gu recalled his strategy advisor, Professor Lan's warning, 'if your decision is wrong, you may destroy the entire enterprise" (1999 case: Huabao Air Conditioner).

Among the 77 cases in the post-West sample, 56 regard strategy formulation as their primary focus. Major decisions discussed in the post-West sample include: Marketing strategy, mergers and acquisitions, reorganization, personnel choice, competitive strategy, corporate strategy, financing strategy, diversification and market entry, pricing and new product launch, quality assurance, promotion strategy, global strategy, information system strategy, and so forth.

Topics choices in the pre-West sample of 1992 cases are different. While organizational objectives are also dealt with, only 13 (23 percent) of the 57 1992 cases focus on strategy issues at the top level. Instead, many 1992 cases deal with issues concerning the life and welfare of the employees. Some 1992 cases provide such vivid details of the problems and hardships in employees' lives that readers can almost feel their pain and agony. Take the "Wave of Resignation in Energy Research Institute" case for example.

The case starts with the pending resignation of a key researcher, Mr. Xiao, who was 51 years old and lived with his family of five in a tiny, 20-square meter flat. The Institute had twice promised to give Xiao a larger apartment, but in both cases, Xiao was passed over because he was not the type of person to create a stir. Although Xiao had been a loyal member of the institute, he finally decided to resign, because another company offered him a three-bedroom apartment as a signing bonus. Hastening his decision to resign was the rumor that the government would soon stop allocating free-housing to staff members of state-owned enterprises. The case describes Xiao's situation this way:

"The two sons of Xiao live in the 8-square-meter northern room; Xiao, Xiao's wife and their 20-year-old daughter live together in the 12-square-meter southern room. Xiao loves books more than anything else. No matter how tight his financial situation is, he would squeeze every penny he could to buy books, even to the extent of not having enough food. In the 12-square-meter room, there are three big bookcases, a twin bed, two desks, plus a dresser with a TV set atop; there virtually is no open space in the room except a narrow path in the middle. Each night, Xiao's daughter would sleep on a makeup bed, placed in the narrow middle path. Because Xiao often works late into the night at the desk in the room, his wife and daughter could hardly sleep ..."

The above case is not uncommon in the 1992 sample. Other employee-centered issues in 1992 sample include building entertainment facilities for newly recruited younger workers, improving shower facilities for female workers, the symbolic status of workers in the factory, and other similar issues.

The breadth and depth of coverage in the 1992 cases is notable. They deal with not only strategic decisions, but also the often mundane but no less challenging issue of managing human behavior. In the rational domain, human behavior is seen as calculative, driven by cost and benefits considerations. But behavior can also be habits that are more or less self-actuating dispositions or tendencies to engage in a previously adopted or acquired form

of action (Camic 1992). Sometimes, problems arise not because of misaligned incentives, but due to the inertia of human habits. Take the "Non-smoking Campaign in Petrochemical Factory No. 5" for example.

This case details the efforts of Petrochemical Factory No. 5 to implement the non-smoking policy established by corporate headquarters. This was a policy long established to ensure production safety in the industry, but was never consistently enforced because of deeply-rooted smoking habits in the workforce. Various measures had been attempted by many factories, but none seemed to have been effective. For example, some factories made those who were caught smoking in the factory "police" others. They had to "catch" ten other smokers before they were allowed to return to work, and they got no pay for those "policing" hours or days. Factory No. 5 inflicted heavy fines as punishment, but that only made smokers go "underground." Some young workers challenged the necessity of the rule, arguing that if the factory bans smoking because lighting up a cigarette might cause a fire, then why shouldn't the factory also shut down the canteen, since it lit fires for meals four times a day. Other workers appealed against the rule on the grounds that smoking was especially important to night-shift workers, saying that it was really difficult to keep alert in pre-dawn hours without cigarettes. Still others found creative ways to circumvent the rules. After the introduction of the rule against "smoking on factory premises," the case describes the workers' responses as follows:

> "Floor workers began finding all kinds of excuses to go outside the factory gate so that they could smoke. Some workers climbed and sat atop the factory's fence wall, with their bottoms towards the factory and their faces to the street, so that they could smoke 'outside' the factory premises."

Of the thirteen paragraphs of the case, eleven are devoted to the perspectives of the workers. Furthermore, these paragraphs are presented with the most intimate details and feel of the situation, making the case very engaging.

Blake and Mouton (1964)'s managerial grid identified task- and people-orientations as the two fundamental dimensions of leadership styles. If we classify case topics into the categories of primarily task-oriented and primarily people-oriented, the 1992 cases are more balanced in task- and people orientations. Such cases convey a clear message to MBA students, that is, managing human behavior can be just as challenging as making strategic decisions. Topics in the 1999/2003 cases, on the other hand, are dominated by task dimension concerns and the cases seldom provide much detail about the human side of the employees. This explains in part why the "H" dimension declined from 40 percent in 1992 to 13 percent in 2003.

In his exit interview, Kim Clark, the former Dean of Harvard Business School, responded to the question of "What was the toughest part of the job?" this way: "It always comes down to people. The hardest decisions are about who to promote and who not to. The toughest situations are dealing with real-life human problems that come up in people's lives, not only job performance but family matters, health issues, disappointments. The most difficult issues often involve life outside the School" (HBS Alumni Bulletin 2005). If what Kim Clark said is true not only for running a business school, but for management in general, the changes in the post-West Chinese cases seem to be guiding students in the wrong direction.

Leadership Role: From Consensus Builder to "Master Strategist"

Although MBA cases usually present only decision scenarios, not specific decision approaches, they are nevertheless based on some implicit decision models, which guide the case writers in their choice of case materials, narrative approach, and structural format. This brings us to the third change between the 1992 and 1999/2003 case samples: Leadership role and decision-making approaches.

The majority of the 1992 cases describe decision-making as a process of intense social interaction among many stakeholders with frequent reference to informal organizations and social motivations in the workplace. They paint a picture where organizations are coalitions of diverse interest groups with unresolved conflicts in goals (March/Shapiro 1992), and leadership is "a social art" based on "working with and through others" (Garvin 2003). A good manager must be sensitive to the political landscape of the organization, moving carefully within the "corridors of comparative indifference" (Wrapp 1967).

The 1992 case "Over-Due Book Fine Policy" is a good example. This case is about how Mr. Shi, a college Vice President, handled an incident in which students launched a protest against the new library policy of a ten-cent-per-day fine for each over-due book. The story begins with an act of advice-seeking and ally-building:

> "It was the late autumn of 1989. Mr. Shi, Vice President of Western China Management School, was not in the mood to appreciate the beauty of the golden season. Hastening his steps, Mr. Shi was on his way to the house of the retired library director, professor Qi … He wanted to ask professor Qi to help mediate the conflict, as professor Qi was not only the Honorary Director of the library, but also the professor teaching the very class involved in the incident."

The case then goes on to describe a social process of extensive consultation. Professor Qi gained insights into the problem by listening to the perspectives of both students and librarians. Qi first consulted with class monitor Qin, class Party Secretary Wu and four other student representatives to find out what they were really complaining about. Qi then talked to the incumbent library director and a few librarians to get their side of the story. The process was intensely social and the issue, symbolic. The issue in question was not so much of the financial significance of the ten-cent-per-day fine, but the significance and implications each side attached to the policy. The story was set against the background of larger issues of social unrest in the wake of the 1989 Tian'anmen Square incident. Among the intangible but crucial factors was the students' widespread dissatisfaction with the political problems at the time (students missed the deadlines for the books because of their participation in street demonstrations outside the campus), the reduced services resulting from a budget cut in the school, and the long standing tension between semi-skilled librarians and bright-yet-immature students. The school authorities were concerned about the political implications should this incident trigger another round of student unrest in the already very tense political atmosphere.

What mattered in Qi's leadership role was not so much brilliant analysis, but an ability and inclination to understand the perspective of others. His managerial success was not some incredible foresight, but an ability to build consensus.

Reflecting this "consensus-building" role of leadership, the 1992 cases typically depict decision-making and problem-solving in collective settings. Decision making in 34 (59 percent) of the 57 cases in the 1992 sample are set in meetings. Of the remaining 23 cases, 6 cases place the managers right on the spot of the problem site, listening to workers, and consulting with others. Many 1992 cases begin with consultation and advice-seeking, ending with a meeting. Below are some examples:

> "One morning in May 1991, Director Li of Binghai Energy Research Institute rushed angrily into Party Secretary Ren's office, with two resignation letters in his hand. Handing the letters to Mr. Ren, Mr. Ji almost yelled, 'look at this! Everybody wants to leave. What is wrong with them?'" (1992 Case: The Resignation Wave in the Energy Research Institute).
>
> "There were so many problems to solve. After discussing the issues briefly between themselves, Party Secretary Zhang and General Manager Liu decided to call a meeting after work. 'Let's have the top management team discuss these issues together. Leveraging the collective wisdom of the group, we should be able to find a good solution'" (1992 Case: Liaonan Heavy Machinery Factory).

By contrast, cases in the 1999/2003 sample tend to depict the case protagonist as a master strategist, whose role is to make big decisions for the organization. Furthermore, decision-making is presented as a detached, analytical task, usually in the form of solving an intellectual puzzle through data analysis. This is clearly reflected in the opening paragraph, where the focal issue was initially presented. Many 1999/2003 cases open with a scene where a single decision-maker is "thinking alone" in a quiet office. For example:

> "On the afternoon of December 31, 1998, John Dai sat in his Beijing office, thinking about the new challenges facing his company in the coming year and possible countermeasures he could take. Dark clouds were gathering outside his window. A typical scene as it was in the cold winter of Beijing, the dark clouds seemed to portent something in particular that day … What should he do?'" (1999 Case: Weike Group).
>
> "In a sunset evening in the summer of 1997, Mr. Niu Gang, CEO of Dashang Group sat quietly, as usual, in his simple but elegant antique-styled office, pondering over the series of problems that had been bothering him in recent days (1999 Case: Dashang Group).
>
> "Mr. Gu had been working on the plan at his desk for several days. Gradually, a plan began to take shape in his mind …" (1999 Case: Huabao Air Conditioners).
>
> "One weekend in June, VP and Engineer-in-chief Jin Yan came to the office very early in the morning, as he usually did. The whole building was empty; there was no one around except those on duty. He took not the elevator, but the stairs instead, walking up slowly as if with something heavy in mind. After entering his office on the third floor, he closed the door, brewed himself a cup of hot tea, and then sat down on the visitor's sofa, sighing with relief and saying to himself that finally he could quietly think through some problems by himself" (2003 Case: Division strategic plan in Sanchuan Company).

Consistent with such "quiet pondering" scenes, is the type of information provided in the case body. Of the 60 cases in the 1999/2003 sample that require the reader to make a decision, 31 (51.6 percent) of them provide only rational domain information such as industry structure and market trends, with little information about internal organization and social dynamics; 20 (33 percent) cases touch upon internal organizational issues and the interactions between case protagonists and other members of the organization, but in much less detail and depth than industry and market information. Only 9 (15 percent) cases (mostly in the OB/HR category) contain in-depth discussions of informal organizations and insights that managers obtained from interaction with others. Negotiation, conciliation, persuasion and other interpersonal exchanges become much less common in the 1999/2003 than in those from 1992.

There have been long standing debates among strategy scholars regarding the nature of managerial jobs. It is well documented that managers are not systematic, analytical thinkers; they wear many hats, work at a hectic pace, interact extensively with peers and outsiders, rely heavily on oral communication, and spend little time on planning and analysis (Mintzberg 1971). Major decisions are seldom made at a single point in time; instead, they are the results of many small actions or incremental choices. Because of the enduring differences in values and diverging interests of the various stakeholders, major decisions are often made outside the formal planning process, often as the outcome of an internal political process where the objectives of powerful individuals and organizational subunits are reconciled and integrated (Quinn 1980).

As Bower (2005) pointed out, the reality is that organizations of any size are built around a series of building blocks, and the people who run them have a lot of responsibilities. If we add up what those people actually do, what ideas they choose to bring up, which of those ideas get funded, and the consequences of those chosen activities, we have the strategy of the company. In other words, strategies emerge from a dynamic organizational process, not calculations on spreadsheets or mission statements on paper. "And once you see that, you begin to ask questions such as: What determines which ideas get sponsored and funded? If I'm the top management, how can I shape that process, manage it, and give it direction?" (Bower 2005, p. 2) With so many "post-West" Chinese cases presenting strategy-making as a purely analytical task detached from operation and social context, there is a danger that such cases may encourage MBA students to look for silver bullets, instead of making the hard effort of effecting tiny improvements at many places throughout the organization.

Decision Context: From "Thick Description" to "History-Free"

The fourth change between "pre-West" and "post-West" cases is the decision context. Probably out of a desire to make the strategic situation as dramatic as possible thus making the case more engaging, the 1999/2003 cases tend to depict strategy-making as a hard choice between two or three clearly formulated, radically different alternatives, made under a crisis circumstance. In doing so, many of the 1999/2003 cases are devoid of historical and institutional contexts, free of emotion and feeling, and far removed from the feel of the situation, rendering the description of the strategy situation far too simplistic. For example, after lengthy discussions about the crisis-like situation, three clear

options are listed in the Xinlin Group case: "The most critical of all now is to develop a three-year plan, because all the alternatives being considered – to set up a joint venture, to take out more loans, to expand into Asian markets, or to compete with foreign companies in the domestic market – boil down to only one question: Where is the company heading in the next three to five years?. "

While economists tend to conceptualize human decisions as the consequences of rational choice, that is, the calculation of anticipated costs and benefits of the likely outcome of various options, "sociologists find institutions everywhere" (DiMaggio/Powell 1991, p. 9). Economic actions are embedded in institutions that evolve in a path-dependent way, shaped by a nation's unique history and socially constructed meanings. It has been documented in numerous studies that the anonymous market of the neoclassical model is virtually nonexistent in economic life and that transactions of all kinds are rife with social connections. Organizations are shaped by "a co-evolutionary interaction between the construction of environmental niches, organizational form, and its context, under the auspices of generic strategy" (Sorge/Barssig 2003, p. 1263). The implication is that managers' attempts at purposive actions are embedded in concrete, ongoing systems of social relations (Powell 1992). Their behavior, therefore, results from a combination of rational choice calculations plus alternative logics of means and ends constructed socially (Fligstein 2001). If cases are to help students understand the complex social context of business, "thick" description of reality that unravels layers of meanings created by human actors in social settings and that take account of historical forces and nested institutional systems of the focal organization is critical (Redding 2005).

The 1992 cases, largely free from Western influence, appear to do a much better job in this regard; strategic issues are set against a backdrop of broad institutional systems, the history of the organization and on-going, reciprocal social obligations. The rational consideration of business alternatives is intrinsically linked to human, social and political issues. The 1992 case "Red Flag Machinery Factory" is a good example.

In this case, the strategic issue facing Mr. Chen Min, the factory's newly-appointed Party Secretary, is how to turn around a loss-making factory that used to make munitions. Diversification into civilian products and relocation out of its current mountainous area are the two principal alternatives under consideration. Instead of providing readers with pre-processed information organized around products, markets, and locations, the text is largely like minutes from a meeting, or an almost verbatim record of conversations among nine protagonists, each advocating their preferred course of action. The strategic question of whether to diversify into civilian products or to move to a city more geographically favorable to such a business, is intrinsically intertwined with the history of the company, and seen differently by these nine people due to their varied functional backgrounds, life stage and career aspirations, company tenure and emotional attachment, and the dynamics of personal relationships among them.

The Party Deputy Secretary sees the problem as losing talent to the private sector because of the rigid compensation scheme; the production manager sees it as a problem of a poor location; the chief engineer with ammunition expertise sees the problem as misdirected diversification; the younger engineer who is an inventor advocates developing new products; the chief accountant raises the issue of working capital and debt, etc. All these issues are intertwined; be it economic or social, historical or political, financial or

symbolic, everything is related to something else. Below is the account of the Deputy Manager, who runs the day-to-day operation:

"I agree with most of my senior colleagues in that we should not talk about relocation too readily. People in this factory are already in a not-so-stable mood. More often than not, when things are still being discussed at our meetings, rumors are already flying all over the factory; everybody comes to my home asking if the new director has decided to move the factory. I have been working here for more than 30 years. I did not only see one building after another being built in this factory, but also how they were built brick by brick. How could we not feel strongly attached to this place? If this factory has to move finally, I'd rather stay here as a forest watcher ...

Our problem is not the location but the product. Once we have developed a new generation of military products, life will get easier for us. Don't you all remember the story of the Guibei Military factory which made a good fortune in the international market by virtue of introducing its new product, the four-barrel cannon, and whose director consequently became a mayor? Of course, the development of non-military products is also important, but we have to make sure that we are on a right track. We have paid so much to learn to develop new products that we shouldn't waste money any more ... I am in charge of logistical support, the least-liked job in the whole factory no matter how hard you work. Everyone comes to me to complain about the low quality of our service, but what can I do? Had I had the money, I would have got an air conditioner installed in every family's home. Everyone is reaching out for money from me. Employees want schooling subsidies and school buses for their kids; our hospital needs new medical equipment; our canteen needs ventilation machines; and our school needs sport facilities. It is really hard. I myself have four kids, two of whom are working on temporary contracts in the factory, and the other two barely making ends meet running small businesses. Kids born in mountains have to suffer with their poor parents. Every year, only a few kids can manage to pass the national exam and get admitted into polytechnics or universities; they can make it because they are deemed the most promising by the factory which pays a great deal to fund their schooling. Besides, the utility company, postal service, road maintenance and insurance company all come and ask for money. Nothing functions without money any more ..."

The issue in this case is undoubtedly strategic, but the way it is narrated makes it fairly clear that formulating a strategy is as much an intellectual job of analyzing task information as a delicate social process of untangling institutional web formed in a company's long history, making sense of the sweeping social changes triggered by China's reform policy, and finding solutions to the hundreds of thorny problems in the everyday life of many people. Understanding the historical and institutional context is particularly important in China today, where the whole society is undergoing fundamental changes. Unfortunately, few "post-West" Chinese cases presented business problems using such a "thick description" approach with this level of rich historical and institutional details.

Values Orientation: From Open Discussion to Questionable Neutrality

MBA teaching materials typically portray management as value-neutral and universal. But as Grey (2004) pointed out, management is never neutral; the supposedly scientific approach to management studies actually conceals a commitment to a particular set of

values. Barley and Kunda (1992) argued that many of the MBA programs and teaching materials actively promoted a single managerial-centric outlook that serves to uphold management control. Lissack and Richardson (2003) criticized business schools for using "Models without Morality" that actually encouraged "moral underdevelopment".

Contrasting the 1992 and 1999/2003 samples of Chinese cases, it again appears that there is a shift in value orientation. Among the cases that explicitly addressed the value orientation issue of management, the two samples differ greatly. Harmony and fairness were more important in 1992, while efficiency and profit maximization were more prominent themes in 1999/2003. Accordingly, the 1992 cases tend to be sympathetic to workers, and 1999/2003 cases, to management. For example, one 1992 case discusses the rights of "Workers Representatives Conference", the Chinese equivalent of a labor union in the West, to hold a vote on the appointment of managers, and to have a say on the business plan for the factory (1992 Case: Green Mountain Ink Factory). Another 1992 case described an election episode in which a factory's general manager was voted out of office by the workers, but later reinstated by higher authorities, and the subsequent shock wave this caused in the media (1992 Case: A Turbulent Episode in Hongwei Chemical Instrument Factory). The case did not exactly "endorse" the view that workers should be allowed to vote on the appointment of top managers, but it did devote great attention to the views of the workers.

The value orientation in the 1999/2003 case samples are different. Implicit in most of the post-West cases is the view that workers are a passive cog of the corporate machine, "as an instrument of production, … as a resource to be exploited and monitored, as a cost to be controlled and minimized" (Aktouf 1992, p. 411). One 1999 case exemplifies such instrumental view of employees. The case deals with the problem facing an international joint venture (JV) where workers' rising expectation for higher pay conflicted with the objective of maximizing shareholder wealth. In the case, workers demanded higher wages and bonuses because of the JV's recent financial success and the surge in profit. The joint venture's CEO, a foreigner, gave the following stern-worded lecture to the workers:

"Don't you know what the difference between an employee and an owner is? It was the shareholders who paid for your high wages when the joint venture was losing money. Now that business is good and profits are rising, it is the time for shareholders to get their return, not you. If you still don't know what an employee is …, let me tell you as the CEO. I will never pay eleven cents for anything that I can buy in the market for ten cents. The reason foreign companies come here to invest is because of the cheap labor. If Chinese labor cost is no longer competitive, nobody will come invest and you will have to go back to your poorly paid state jobs or risk being unemployed" (1999 case: Snow Joint Venture Pharmaceutical Co.).

That section of the case ends with this comment: "workers know what the CEO said was correct in terms of economic theory of market wages, but the emotional pain was nevertheless intolerable." It should be noted that this explicit discussion of value conflict happens in the context of an international joint venture, which makes the topic more open to discussion because it is framed as a conflict between Chinese labor and foreign capitalists rather than between workers and management within China.

The change in value orientation between the two case samples is also evident in the motivations attributed to executives. The 1999/2003 cases tend to depict senior executi-

ves as unselfish even missionary leaders interested only in the common good. Poor performance is the result of wrong decisions based on judgment errors not intended by the executive, but are never a consequence of misaligned incentives or unethical behavior. Many 1992 cases, however, depict a picture of top managers as agents with self-interest and personal problems, who might themselves be part of the problem.

One 1992 case talks about the hidden agenda of a general manager, Mr. Gong, in dealing with personnel issues. Mr. Gong was the general manager of the Seaside Port Construction Company and the protagonist of the case. One of the issues Mr. Gong faced in the case was whether to allow his deputy, Mr. Bai, to transfer to an affiliated but competing company. According to the case, Mr. Bai was more talented, and better respected by the workers, than Mr. Gong. The case makes it very clear that what concerned Mr. Gong in making this decision were basically its potential implications for his career. The dilemma facing Mr. Gong was that if he denied Mr. Bai's transfer request and kept Mr. Bai in his company, he would put his own standing in the company at risk. However, if he allowed Mr. Bai to leave and join the other company, he would subject his company's performance to the threat of competition from the company that Mr. Bai was about to join (1992 case: Seaside Port Construction Company).

Along the same line, another 1992 case depicts a production manager who abused her power to deny an award to the engineer who dared to disobey her (1992 case: The Selection of the Digital Machine Operator). Other examples of the self-interested behavior of top management mentioned in 1992 cases include personal rivalry among top executives (1992 case: Kate Special Mental Company), "face" consideration when settling a fraud case (1992 case: How to End This Fraud Case), an abusive managerial style arising from the ego of a successful general manager (1992 case: The Phenomenon of "Abusive Wang"), and giving raises to less qualified managers to please a boss (1992 case: Seaside Port Construction Company).

The changes in value orientation between the 1992 and 1999/2003 case samples are also reflected by what is not discussed. The 1992 cases are frank and open about the inevitable interest conflicts and value crashes during the transitional economy period. There is no discernable attempt in the 1992 sample to avoid any sensitive topics involving the dark side of management. For example, the "Morning Light Analytical Instruments Factory" case is devoted entirely to the issue of whether the reform policy is consistent with the ideology of socialism. Other value-laden and politically-sensitive topics in the 1992 sample include strikes (1992 case: Yuexi Electronic Factory), the political status of the working class, money under the table (1992 case: Feiyan Rubber Products Factory), exchanging sexual favors for business advantages (1992 case: How to End This Fraud), and financial losses resulting from hasty decisions by top managers (1992 case: No Leisure to Eat Fish).

Discussion of such topics has virtually ended in the post-West sample. The 1999/2003 cases do not mention them at all, except for one case on a legal dispute of ownership between the board chairman and the CEO. Take corruption as an example. Wederman (2005) documented that after opening up to the West, corruption in China "intensified" not only in quantity but also in quality (in terms of the nature of the corruption). While corruption was openly discussed in the 1992 cases, this discussion is absent from the 1999/2003 cases. None of the 1999/2003 cases mention corruption, bribery, kickbacks, or fraud.

Discussion

The findings above indicate that a paradigm shift has occurred in China's management education system. The images of organizational reality and managerial work, seen mirrored in MBA teaching cases, have changed dramatically.

Taken as a whole, post-West Chinese cases have been "rationalized". Chinese case writers appear to have abandoned the holistic approach to management prevalent in the 1992 cases, and adopted a rather simplistic and overly rational framework in more recent cases. In the pre-West cases, organizations are depicted as embedded in institutional networks, constrained by organizational history and social obligations, with informal organizations co-existing with formal structures. All of the problems are intertwined; decisions depend not only on cost/benefit tradeoffs, but also on a range of non-economic factors such as routines and habits, feelings and emotions, symbolic meaning of actions, egos and personalities, ethics and politics, etc. Management is thus a messy process, with many factors beyond the control of the executives. The post-West Chinese cases published in 1999/2003, on the other hand, depict a neat world where organizations are autonomous and free of politics, goals are centrally coordinated, behaviors are rational, and the workplace is simply a place to work. Executives are the master of their universe, organizations are driven by strategy and decision-making is a matter of disinterested data analysis. As the findings of numerous studies on the nature of managerial work have documented (Mintzberg 1973, McCall/Morrison/Hanna 1978, Hales 1986), the messy world pictured in the 1992 cases is a more truthful representation of organizational reality than is presented in the 1999/2003 cases.

To a substantial degree, post-West Chinese cases have also been "de-cultured"; that is, China's unique cultural context has largely faded away in case depictions. In the pre-West sample, most Chinese cases come with unmistakable Chinese cultural underpinnings; the problems they address, the background they describe, and the way protagonists think, act and interact, are clearly China-specific. In the post-West sample, however, many Chinese cases are culturally not very "Chinese." Collective identity, long-term orientation, respect for history and hierarchy, and other Chinese cultural traits have mostly disappeared. The importance of Guanxi (Pye 1992), Face (Hofstede/Bond 1988), Biaoxian (Walder 1963), the role of the Communist Party and government policy in business, is barely touched. In fact, for many of the post-West cases, if the protagonists and locations were changed into Western names, one could hardly tell that they were Chinese cases.

What then are the likely consequences of presenting teaching cases with an overly rational framework to MBA students? Numerous studies have documented that media presentation of reality has a significant impact on people's perception, attitudes and behavior (see, for example, Shrum 1996, Shrum/O'Guinn 1993, Volgy/Schwarz 1980, Segrin and Nabi 2002, Goodman 2002). Given the extensive exposure to teaching cases of MBA students in their 2-year program (more than 500 cases for Harvard MBA's and more than 100 for most Chinese MBA's), distorted representation of organizational reality in teaching cases may have a similar effect on MBA students and hinder their development as effective managers.

Take the tendency of the post-West cases to depict organizations as free of political in-fighting for example. A basic fact in organizations is that important decisions typically

require the support and approval of many different people at different levels of management and in different subunits of the organization. Because enduring differences in values and preferences, the many peoples involved in a decision tend to disagree about the true nature of the problem and the likely outcome of various solutions. Furthermore, because resources are limited, important organizational decisions are often political. Therefore, it follows that to develop effective managers' business schools must adequately cover the political dimension of organizational reality in teaching cases. Avoiding politically sensitive topics in teaching cases may impede MBA students' learning of political skills that are important both for organizational effectiveness and for personal growth.

Take the tendency of the post-West cases to depict senior executives as superman-type heroes for another example. Studies have shown that an executive's image of himself/herself has a significant impact on his/her judgment of the likelihood of future events and the associated risk (Chatterjee/Hambrick forthcoming). This is a significant problem since underestimating potential risks is a key reason why smart executives fail (Finkelstein 2003). Accurate knowledge of oneself is thus fundamentally important in helping managers inoculate themselves against self-deception (Taylor 2006, Ashford et al. 2003, Arbinger Institute 2002). Since MBA students are known to have a tendency to overestimate their own ability (Brett/Atwater 2001), presenting executives as all powerful superheroes will be counterproductive for students who should be developing a realistic conception of themselves and their abilities.

Presenting teaching cases devoid of cultural context can be equally harmful, especially for MBA students working in non-Western cultures. Take the leadership role in the USA and China for example. In an individualism-dominated culture such as that of the USA, each individual is responsible for his or her own action and the manager's job is to make decisions. In the collectivist Chinese culture, people define themselves as members of a group and a key function of the leader is to develop shared meanings among group members. The role of the manager is not so much to make big decisions as to listen to other people, address their concerns, and mobilize the whole organization. In this context, the social standing of a manager is just as important as his/her official position; understanding people's feelings and emotions is as crucial as understanding the industry and the business. The depictions that the protagonists play the role of a lone hero in the post-West cases may mislead Chinese MBA students to neglect the consensus-building role of leadership which is essential for success in China. Similarly, depicting organizations as "history-free" is problematic for students working in a "high-context" culture like China (Hall 1981), where understanding the external environment, the specific situation, and the imbedded institutional framework is crucial for success.

The above discussions bring up a much larger issue of whether management theories are "universal" or, to put it another way, whether it is appropriate to transfer and apply Western-based theories to countries in different cultural settings. In a comprehensive review, Boyacigiller and Adler (1989) examined the influence of cultures on management theories. They concluded that the cultural values of the United States underlie and have fundamentally framed management theories, and that the influences of three American cultural values- the belief in free will, individualism and a low-context orientation, are prevalent.

Unlike many other cultures that see causality as determined by factors beyond their control, Americans generally see themselves as capable of controlling, to a substantial degree, their environment and their own destiny (Stewart 1972, Adler/Jelinek 1986). The popular American proverb says it well, "if there is a will, there is a way". Reflecting this American belief in "free will," most organizational theories describe organizations as malleable, and conceptualize managers as having sufficient power to influence their environment. Individualism is another commonly shared American value. In an individualist culture, the relationship between an individual and the organization is calculative, or "rational." In collectivist societies, the ties between the individual and organization have a moral component (Allen/Miller/Nath 1988). Since American culture ranks highest on individualism in the world (Hofstede 1980), many management theories, such as agency-behavior and individual incentive-based compensation scheme, are built upon this fundamental assumption on human behavior. Similarly, the low-context orientation in the United States is the reason why Western organizational theories historically have placed minimal emphasis on such contextual factors as history, social setting, culture, and government.

While the focus of Boyacigiller and Adler (1989)'s study is on organizational theories, its findings also shed light on the cultural foundation of MBA teaching cases. It can be argued that the same set of American cultural values, free will, individualism and low context orientation, also underlie and have framed the typical Western MBA cases. This is why both Harvard Business School (HBS) and Kennedy School of Government (KSG) cases center on individual CEO's, see organizations as driven by the free will of their CEO's, with little attention paid to organizational history and decision context. The profound influence of American culture is probably also the reason why an over-emphasis on rational analysis has persisted in HBS cases for so long. Harvard Business School realized the rational bias in its cases as early as 1986 and launched an ambitious program to rectify this imbalance, but HBS cases written afterwards were just as overly rational as those written before the program (Swiercz/Ross 2003, Ross 1998).

If management theories are not acultural, what are the risks of applying Western-based theories to countries with non-Western cultures? One danger is that it may hinder the development of indigenous theories. Tsui et al. (2004) reviewed 330 studies that applied Western theories to management problems in China, published between 1984 and 2003; the study concluded that there is "a substantial risk" that applying Western-based theory to problems in China might "ultimately stifle learning" (p. 141). This is because China's long history and unique institutions have made Chinese firms so different that even some of the most basic conceptions of a Western-type firm, such as definite ownership and clear organizational boundaries, may not hold. Meanwhile, because there are enough surface similarities between Chinese and Western firms to allow Western theories/concepts to be tested in China, Chinese scholars eager to publish in leading Western journals may "force fit" Western theories to Chinese management phenomena, instead of making the effort to develop indigenous and original theories that explain the unique management problems in China.

Another danger of applying Western-based theories to other cultures, in the context of writing MBA teaching cases, is that it may lead to a neglect of topics atypical to the envi-

ronment of the United States but important to the host country. One such topic in China is non-market strategy (Baron/Diermeier 2007). In the 36 best-selling HBS cases analyzed by Swericz and Ross (2003), none of them addressed non-market strategy issues. This is understandable for American MBA programs because firms operate in a well-developed market system in the United States, and non-market strategy is not essential. But the situation in China is quite different. Meyer and Lu (2004) pointed out that the boundary between the state and the firm, and between the firm and its subsidiaries, are not well defined in China. Managers in China have to continuously negotiate both kinds of boundaries, or, in other words, engage in non-market strategies. However, not a single case in the pool of post-West 1999/2003 sample deal with non-market strategy issues. To the extent that non-market or political strategies are critical to the success of Chinese firms, leaving such topics out in MBA teaching cases is clearly counterproductive to the development of effective Chinese managers.

Summary and Conclusions

Taking MBA teaching cases as an embodiment of management theories, orientations and values, our findings indicate that a paradigm shift has occurred in China's management education system. While the emphasis on rational analysis of managerial problems has been significantly strengthened, attentions to the human, political and symbolic dimensions of organizational reality have declined. The holistic approach to problem solving, long term orientation, and consensus-building role of leadership that are typical of traditional Chinese culture and prevalent in the 1992 cases have largely been replaced by an overly rationalistic, CEO-centered, strategy-driven, and shareholder wealth-dominated world view in the 1999/2003 cases.

The causes of such a paradigm shift in business education system are necessarily complex. One possible reason is the status envy and imitation (Buckley et al. 2007) in social learning. According to social learning theorists, one of the most important forms of social learning is imitation (Bandura et al. 2006). People tend to mimic the conduct and attitudes of their prominent peers or role models. Because the West is the historical home of MBA education and HBS is considered the leader in case methods, it is natural that Chinese case writers imitate HBS cases in both topic choices and underlying framework. Most writers of the 1992 Chinese cases had no exposure to Western management theories, nor access to MBA programs or HBS cases; the pre-West cases they wrote were based on the frameworks and perspectives that were typical of Chinese executives and scholars during the pre-West period. The writers of post-West cases, on the other hand, have clearly been influenced by the main stream Western management education theories and frameworks; phrases typical in Western management theories like "sustainable competitive advantage," "core competencies," "diversification," "segmentation," "net present values," "shareholder values" became quite common in many of the post-West cases.

Another factor, potentially more harmful to the long term development of business education system in other countries, is the mistaken perception that, as a learning vehicle, MBA programs and case methods are acultural and can be applied universally to all countries. However, a management case makes more than management sense to a manager. It

makes sense within the manager's entire view of reality and significance. Management education becomes a cross-cultural activity when the focal management concept does not automatically fit with the learner's more global view of reality. The further removed culturally learners are from the West, the more seriously schools ought to address the relevance of culture in management education. The de-culturalization of more recent Chinese MBA cases should sound an alarm for management scholars not only in China but also in other countries.

It appears that in the process of learning from the West, Chinese case writers have adopted not only the structures and format of the Western MBA teaching cases, but also their implicit worldview and values. This paradigm shift in Chinese MBA teaching cases is worrisome because globalization is spreading Western management education theories and pedagogies into more and more developing countries. Studies have shown that past efforts at transferring curricula from the West, coupled with limited efforts to develop local teaching materials, has resulted in the adoption of curricula that is only "marginally different' from that in the West, and doest not meet the learning requirements of students in those countries (Kipping et al. 2004). It appears that along the learning of useful concepts and tools, flawed learning has also occurred in China's management education system. After more than twenty years of learning from the West, it is time that scholars in China and policy makers in developing countries take a more critical look at the Western MBA model and develop for their managers more balanced teaching cases that also incorporate their own culture. By identifying the problems of conventional HBS-style cases and some of the distinct features of Chinese cases written before the infusion of Western MBA programs, we hope this study will be helpful to those who wish to write better-balanced, culture-sensitive cases.

Acknowledgements

Endnotes

1   This refers not to any geographic area, but rather to the cold-war period political and ideological entities. We adopted the definition of Tsui et al. (2004) and use the term "West" as shorthand for this group of developed, capitalist countries, most specifically, the United States, Canada and Western European countries.
2   National Science Foundation (NSF) is a prestigious, semi-government agency in charge of natural- and social sciences research and development in China; applicants must meet very high standard to be considered for NSF funding.

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