

# **The Internationalization of Business Studies in Europe and China: towards a unique perspective without conflict?**

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## Abstract

The contents and institutions to learn business studies are being internationalized in the last years. Analysing the historical process of their diffusion in two groups, the European Higher Education System and China, it seems they follow different patterns which could be explained by the theories of the internationalization of companies. These expanding processes would converge in one unique model, which could create conflicts not only with the contents but also with the teaching and learning process. To solve this challenge, cultural factors are revised and some solutions are suggested to avoid possible conflicts.

**Keywords:** Business Studies; Chinese Business Studies; European Business Studies; Internationalization; Cross-Cultural Business Studies.

## 1 Introduction

It is well accepted that education has both economic and social influences in development (Fukase, 2010). On the one hand, education is one of the basic pillars necessary for economic modern growth (Pueyo-Balldellou and Sanso-Frago, 2005; Mulligan and Sala-i-Martin, 2000) and national competitiveness (World Economic Forum, 2009). On the other hand, education constitutes one of the basic factors in which the human development degree is based<sup>1</sup> (United Nations, 2009). In consequence, education is revealed as a cross factor which increases welfare at different levels and generates positive externalities in its environment (McMahon, 2007; Zhang et al 2009).

The last two decades until today are characterized by the acceleration of the globalization phenomenon <sup>2</sup> (Ramírez-Alesón, 2004). Global markets, multinational enterprises and interdependent world economies will characterize the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Chang, 2002). The standardization and diffusion of studies would facilitate the coordination of activities in different markets by companies, because specific skills and knowledge for each economic activity are supposed in different studies (Mintzberg, 1979)<sup>3</sup>.

Business education is especially important because future managers will be the main actors of the globalization process (Glaum and Rinker, 2002). According to the upper echelon theory the strategy of companies will be taken by managers (Anwar, 2010), who finally will extend their worldwide operations according to their decisions (Chuang et al 2009).

The contents that future managers will study could seem similar in all the countries, however some of them are being implemented in accordance with models following an ideological mainstream thinking, basically Anglo-Saxon capitalism (Dore, 2006; Wong, 2009). According to this, there would be a different pattern of the business contents diffusion, which could be explained analysing the diffusion of political ideologies in some locations.

In spite of these differences, is accepted that corporations are in need of highly mobile, open-minded and culturally adaptive graduates (Glaum and Rinker, 2002). International

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<sup>1</sup> The Human Development Index is a composite index composed from statistics from life expectancy, education and gross domestic product.

<sup>2</sup> Globalization can be defined as a broad process of eradicating unnecessary restrictions to global commerce (Park and Vambery, 2010), integrating the national economies in a unique market (Alcalde-Fradejas et al 2003).

<sup>3</sup> For instance, when one company needs specific human resources for positions in another country, it knows what kind of profile should demand because of similar programs are followed in many countries and can cover the managerial needs they have.

business education given to the future managers plays a key role in the quest to keep up with the rapid pace of globalization in business and industry (Aggarwal et al 2008).

Due to similarities in studies and the need of collective mindset for the decision makers, is desirable for students to exchange to different places having richer academic and internship experiences (Parker and Heriot, 2009). The global mindset is one of the key parameters in the successful internationalization of small and medium-sized companies (Nummela, 2004). Also, internationalization processes of companies are influenced by the prior international experience of their managers (Vermeulen and Shvyrkov, 2007).

Skills related to tacit knowledge necessary in international environment -like cross cultural vision- are difficult to be learnt without staying, studying or working in another cultural environment. The internationalization of business studies in the sense of making students able to have experiences in other centres, environments or countries can help to develop these needs.

Because of this need, there is an internationalization of the studies in itself along the world, and an internationalization of the institutions having global presence with exchange of students in different countries (Glaum and Rinker, 2002).

Western Universities, especially in the European Higher Education System, are increasing their exchange programs to be able to follow studies in many different countries. At the same time, Business Schools not only try to recruit international students in one location (e.g. MBAs in local Business Schools), but also try to expand some branches to other countries (e.g. Insead in Singapore; Instituto de Empresa in New York and in the short term in Africa); or use exchange programs in cooperation with other institutions to offer international presence to the students (e.g. Reims Management School). Rankings of business schools increasingly give weight to internationalization as one of the relevant criteria (Glaum and Rinker, 2002).

However, there is a challenge in this internationalization process, because theories about both management and its practice differ significantly among countries and cultures (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005; Tchäicha and Davis, 2005). The internationalization of studies can find difficulties to match each other between Western and Asian countries, due to the different way to process information (Graham and Lam, 2003), methodology to research (Kashima, 2005) or ethics in business (Crittenden et al 2008; Mihalek et al 2009; Smith, 2009). Transferring management knowledge is more complex than transferring physical technologies across borders, because the first ones are less codified and even more interdependent with the social context (Newell, 1999).

Among all of national cultures in the world, the cultural blocks can be defined as relatively homogeneous groups of countries having less within-variance in terms of culture when compared within the differences between cultural blocks (Vermeulen and Shvyrkov, 2007). In this global background, Chinese and Western blocks can be analysed as big two

groups due to their similarities within group and their differences between both (Onesimo, 2009). It should be considered that Western teaching and learning approaches are not always successful in the Chinese context and must be adapted to cultural differences (Parnell et al, 2003).

This convenient conceptualization is important because of several reasons. Firstly, the number of joint ventures between Chinese and Western firms, as well as the number of foreign-owned enterprises operating in China has increased dramatically in the last decade (Parnell et al 2003). Secondly, the demand of westerner management theories is increasing in China becoming the world's largest new market for management education in the next few decades (Thompson, 2002). And finally, China constitutes the biggest potential market for goods and services in the world (Newell, 1999).

Because of the above mentioned, internationalization process of studies can have several perspectives. The first one is the historical expanding process of business contents, which can explain the actual educational models and their internationalization process. Once the historical events are revised, the internationalization patterns of contents and institutions can be seen similar to the theories of the internationalization of the companies. Also, another perspective would connect the educational factors to take into account for adapting business studies in different cultural backgrounds, which could explain the expansion and success of the programs in different environments.

This paper analyzes briefly the history and diffusion of business studies in Europe and in China necessary to explain the actual situation and its explanation with the theories of international business. Also, cultural and historical factors will be exposed as key factors which influence the learning process in Western and Asian perspective. Both arise as key factors necessary to understand the expansion, design and future of the international business education programs.

## **2 The historical perspective of business education in Europe and China**

### ***2.1 Business education in Europe***

The origin of business studies is not so clear if what is understood by the term is not specified, and the context analyzed is delimited.

There are evidences in different publications and testimonies, about the existence of disseminated business courses in Europe since 1473 in Venice (Italy), University of Ingolstadt (Germany) in 1515, or University of Halle (Germany) in 1727 to mention some of the first ones (Taylor, 2007).

According to those dates, in *stricto sensu* business studies could appear even before the Economics as Science was officially founded in 1776 by Adam Smith publishing "*The wealth of*

nations". As is obvious, this incongruity can be understood because Sciences are constituted after existing a critical mass of information necessary to create its own corpus knowledge. This stage, before the science appears, is labelled "prescience" period by the epistemologist and historian of Science Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996).

According to the above mentioned, there are events well documented and related to business Science before its creation (e.g. the double entry bookkeeping by Luca Pacioli in 1494<sup>4</sup>), or prior behaviours which can be analyzed in economic perspective hundreds of years after their existence (e.g. the bartering and its transition to mint coins, the creation of moneylenders and so on.).

This paper will focus on Business Studies in Higher Education, therefore it looks logic to analyze those studies after the higher institutions appear and they constitute a main group of knowledge to be taught, instead of casual or optional courses related to other disciplines such as cameral studies in Germany or administration courses in engineer or mathematics studies in France.

In this perspective, normally it is accepted according to the historical narrative, that the Wharton School of Finance and Economy at the University of Pennsylvania in 1881 was the first example of Higher Education in everywhere, and then its model was extended to the rest of the world (Taylor, 2007).

Other authors however, consider the HEC School of Management, founded in Paris in 1881, as one of the pioneers of European institutions of higher business education (Amdam, 2008). Taylor (2007) thinks that the oldest existing school offering Business Higher Education was the *École Supérieure de Commerce* de Paris in 1819. Although other authors as Locke (2008) think that the *Grandes Écoles* founded by Napoleon were not at that time a higher education centres as we understand actually.

The lack of consensus among researchers about the origin and first higher business education still exists. In spite of these origins is well accepted that in Europe, German Business Schools were created by 1900 and later would be spread into Scandinavia, the Netherlands, eastern central Europe, Turkey, Italy, Spain and Japan (Locke, 2008).

This expansion process took another direction in Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, because business studies were highly politicized from the two first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century till the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991<sup>5</sup> (Evans and Birch, 1995).

Considering the same similar politic regimes, comments about education in the Soviet Union are applicable to Eastern Europe (Evans and Birch, 1995). In communist countries, business History broke their ideological, intellectual and physical links with western capitalism

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<sup>4</sup> With the publication of *Summa the arithmetica, geometrica, proportioni et proportionalita*.

<sup>5</sup> Soviet Union officially goes from 1922 until 1991

(Fear, 2000). In those countries, normally the courses were linked to quantitative and technical aspects of Economics (e.g. accounting, finance and management science), while the ones more related to behaviour or ideology (e.g. human resources, resources management, marketing, business policy) were less extended and familiar for students (Sexty, 1998).

In consequence, the adaptation and history of Business Education in Europe varies widely depending on the countries and was influenced by polarized politic ideas. For instance, Poland during the socialist period, Universities were heavily politicized and designed to support central planning and communist ideology, delaying the start of Business Schools, until 1990s students could choose between Economics of Capitalism and Economics of Socialism (Leven, 2010).

It looks logic that in the Eastern Europe the adaptation of North American Curricula was later than in the north of Europe and Mediterranean countries. For example in Spain, one of the first institutions to offer business studies was established at the Universidad Comercial de Deusto in Bilbao in 1916, although the first American-style school would be opened later in 1955 in Madrid (Escuela de Organización Industrial) (Puig, 2008).

This separation was not casual. As it can be seen in Figure I, Universities and business schools would differentiate to each other using different methods and approaches. Because of the introduction of scientific and academic goals at an early stage in the German schools, the business communities in Europe that evolved within the German tradition were better prepared for becoming academic institutions due to the early introduction of basic scientific principles in their business schools (Amdam, 2008).

Figure I. General differences between European Universities and Business Schools in teaching Business and Management

| Public Universities  | Private Business Schools                         |
|--|--|
| Internship as an option of the Curriculum                    | Internships as a component of the Curriculum     |
| Blackboard system and analytical skills                      | Case Studies and simulations                     |
| Bigger groups  | Smaller groups                                   |
| Individual work  | Team group work                                  |
| Promote managers and researchers                             | Promote entrepreneurs                            |
| Lower fees   | Higher fees                                      |
| Theoretical orientation                                      | Hand-on orientation                              |
| Admissions by results  | Admissions by paying                             |
| Fewer corporate connections                                  | More corporate connections                       |
| Multiple choice evaluation as a consequence of large classes | Essay questions and public exposition evaluation |

Source: Based on Lewis (1992), Wong (2008) and Hergert (2009).

In the case of Business Schools, most of them due to their similarities share some characteristics such as corporate connections or similar programs, and the top ones use international accreditations like EQUIS in order to internationalize and make them comparable (Urgel, 2007). American business schools had few imitators globally before 1940 (Locke, 2008). However, actually the majority of these studies is focused on North American Schools (Matten and Moon, 2004) and is being internationalized.

This current tendency will have to match another direction taken in the last two decades, when business studies are being modernized and harmonized in Europe because of Bologna Declaration in 1999. The objective is to make the Universities contribute to economic growth and competitiveness, improving the performance of universities respect to education, research and knowledge transfer (Van der Ploeg and Veugelaers, 2008).

The European Union will have to converge in a similar model of business education among its Universities, which in the last decades is highly influenced by the USA models. In case they finally adopt the latter, some adaptations will have to be done because the European higher institutions are characterized by less total investment in higher education compared with the USA ones. Also, in case European Universities harmonize their own model of business education, some aspects as tuition fees have great differences in European countries, although most of them have public funds.

## **2.2 *Business education in China***

It is remarkable that some indigenous Chinese and writing texts related to strategy, leadership and management have existed since thousand of years ago. Confucius in “*The Analects*” describes the characteristics which leaders should have in organizations considering the wealthfare of employees, teamwork and self-sacrifice (Bettingies and Tan, 2007; Rarick, 2009). In addition, militaries and business leaders in China have been studying for generations the manuscript “*The Art of War*” written by Sun Tzu (6<sup>th</sup> century BC), where the importance of flexibility in strategy formulation is discussed (Rarick, 2009).

In spite of these, Chinese business education was disseminated during the 20<sup>th</sup> century in more formal way. Chinese entrepreneurs and managers were exposed to modern westerner management ideas from the early twentieth century, with the translation of Taylor’s ideas by Xu in 1915, and Taylor’s complete book “*The Principles of Scientific Management*” (1911) by Mu in 1916 (Morgan, 2006).

Later, the first management school in China would be established at the Shanghai Jiaotong University in 1929 (Southworth, 1999). It was paradoxically founded during the Chinese Civil War between 1911 and 1949, although the period from 1928 to 1937, was characterized by the stability of Nanjing decade (Morgan, 2006). This school and other similar



which appeared in China would not continue in the same direction. They reoriented their activities to focus on training planners and macro-managers in finance and economics, in order to serve the needs of the state (Southworth, 1999).

During those years between 1949 and 1975 the economic system in China was centrally planned. In general, in that period, main part of enterprise management personnel were cadres transferred from military services (Wang, 1999). Although in the 1950s, they were given more specific knowledge, when Chinese managers were sent to the USSR for training and then had little to do with the “west” (Wong, 2008). Some years later, between 1978 and 1987, main part of enterprise management personnel were promoted from technicians and engineers working at the enterprises (Wang, 1999).

In Communist Party’s period there was no place for private education institutions; in consequence educational policy making, curriculum design and teaching, school finance and personal management were all centrally controlled (Lin, 1999). It is comprehensible that committed communists might feel that allowing modern management theory to be taught in China would, over time, dissipate the communist convictions of the younger generation (Southworth, 1999). Educational system played an important role in social change because it can support or undermine social institutions and values (Evans and Birch, 1995).

The central planned economy means demand was estimated at the centre and production units. Financial performance was irrelevant because surplus revenues had to be handed back to the state. And personnel were directed assigned according to their studies or allocation to a work unit (Southworth, 1999). The state allocated raw materials, coordinated production and distributed finished goods for the whole country. All the investment plans had to be approved by the state, and entrepreneurial activities were discouraged with not so much chances for individual initiatives (Newell, 1999).

Under the Chinese planned economy, there was no need for trained managers, and for teaching fields related to marketing, financial controls or human resource management (Southworth, 1999).

However, everything changed after Mao’s death (1976), and especially with the economic reform leaded by Den Xiaoping (1979), because the need for managers with specific knowledge in market economy was demanded by socialist market economy.

This timid open-door policy known as *gaige kaifang*, was gradually increased and accelerated in the next years. Especially after 2001, China joined the World Trade Organization, and the economy was forced to be more flexible and competitive because of trade liberalization (Millman et al 2008).

In this new global business environment, the acquisition, utilisation and management of technology has assumed greater importance for countries, companies and individuals seek to

advance their competitive advantages in a global market place (Wong, 2008). However, during this process China did not find how to mitigate the growing demand for knowledge workers (Millman et al 2008).

To satisfy this new demand the first MBA was created after a “secret visit” by the special envoy George Schultz in 1979, when an industrial technology cooperation agreement was signed to create the Chinese Industrial Technology Management Training Centre, at the Dalian University of Science and Technology (Wong, 2008). The European centre CEIBS would follow the external cooperation, having a pilot programme in Beijing from 1984 until 1994, when finally they opened a school in Shanghai <sup>6</sup> (Southworth, 1999).

Recognizing the rapidly need for Chinese managers with international business skills and knowledge, the People’s Republic of China started their first own MBA programs at 1991 in nine business schools, growing to 26 in 1994 and finally offering programs in 62 universities in 2001 (Beamish et al 2005).

Actually, there is a mix of institutions which offers high business education such as private and public business schools or universities, specialized MBA programs and so on. However, there are still critics to China affirming that it still do not have the managerial, financial, academic and technical expertise to contribute to economic stabilisation and long term growth, nor to the development of an open and civic society (Wong, 2008).

The current challenge for Chinese government is to observe how the different educational actors configure this emergent market in China. Also, to check whether their programs can really match the socialist-market economy or must be adapted. A new paradigm of management can emerge in China in the next years.

### **3 The historical perspective revised by the theories of international business**

The diffusion of business studies could be explained by the theories of international business. As Uppsala school exposes, the international expansion of organizations would be a gradual process (Johansson and Vahlne, 1977).

In westerners’ capitalist countries the diffusion of the similar contents and institutions to teach business was gradually implemented following firstly the French *Grandes Écoles*, and later the American one from Wharton School. In the beginning, the contents of business studies were internationalized, after that the teaching institutions exchange their programs due to the similarities of the contents, and once they prospected the markets they internationalize as institutions in other markets following specific location factors and mimetic behaviour of similar organizations (see Figure II).

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<sup>6</sup> Another author (Wang, 1999) considers the cooperation started in 1982 although they did not start the MBA program until 1984.

This gradual adaptation was quicker in the countries with more similarities or less psychic distance, specially in the ones related to the same political ideas and the mainstreaming thinking (e.g. Anglo-saxon countries). In this case, in the beginning the political factors would be the key to expand the contents of business studies. And along the time, they were expanded to other more distant locations.

Figure II. Steps in the internationalization of business studies

| Commitment | Steps   |
|------------|---|
| Less       | 1 <sup>st</sup> . Internationalization of contents                  |
|            | 2 <sup>nd</sup> . Internationalization of students                  |
| ↓          |   |
|            | 3 <sup>rd</sup> . More specific agreements, cooperation or partners |
| More       | 4 <sup>th</sup> . Opening centres in other markets                  |

Source: Author's elaboration according to Johansson and Valhne (1977)

For instance, INSEAD operated in the beginning in Europe attracting students from the entire world, and later opened new branches in Arabic countries and in China. Also, ESADE is going to open another centre in New York, in order to be located in more different environments where they could attract students and have international presence and image.

According to OLI's paradigm (Dunning, 1988) most recognised institutions who had an ownership advantage as reputation or enough size to be launched to other markets, and found the internalization of their activities opening new branch was better than exchanging programs with other institutions, finally they internationalize themselves going abroad when they found specific location factors.

However, in this internationalization process, their performance in the market in terms of transferring information and education efficiently, could have some conflicts with the new environment, specially in the ones where the differences in their practices is higher. These conflicts are similar with the ones founded in international business, when some companies decide to go to other markets.

#### **4. Westernization of business studies in China, some considerations in learning and teaching process**

Ideas about management and organization represent particular types of knowledge even an ideology of business practice, which is institutionally structured (Morgan, 2006). The institutions and political attitude of the government with its commercial as well as strategic ties with a given developed country, often favour the importation of the business program from that nation (Fatehi et al 2009).

Then, management activity is embedded in historically shaped institutional and conceptual frameworks that circumscribe the formation and transfer of management strategies and organizational forms (Morgan, 2006).

Concretely under the Soviet Regime, government was in control of all aspects of economic and social activities, and then very little was left to individuals to decide (Fatehi et al 2009). The general communist orientation toward production and “order-giving”, there has been little of the managerial authority or autonomy that characterizes western management in the Central European nations (Waddock, 1997), and also in China during its communist party period (Martinsons and Martinsons, 1996).

At that time, the reason for Chinese enterprise existence was to provide jobs for people and to generally benefit the community in which it was located (Newell, 1999). At socialist periods, they did not need trained people with western management knowledge, and furthermore the education was controlled by socialist governments constraining the offer (Morgan, 2006).

History and political regimes influence contents in teaching business, where could be a lack of tradition teaching, skilled professors and interaction with students in subjects related to management, and then the contents should be gradually and carefully adopted.

Furthermore, theories about both management and its practice differ significantly among cultures (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005; Tchäicha and Davis, 2005). Cultural values toward education in general as well as values toward business education in particular play a determining role (Fatehi et al 2009). Managers act on knowledge received from the business environment around them; their actions produce new knowledge about how to act in a cultural context (Morgan, 2006). When members of different groups meet, do cultural differences become apparent, because perceptions, value judgments or behaviour which are normal within one group maybe seen as abnormal in the context of another group (Glaum and Rinker, 2002).

Several authors had emphasized the different cultural values between China and U.S.A. societies (Graham and Lan, 2003; Newell, 1999; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). It is argument that the way to learn, differs broadly between both, and its study is important because of the imported management education from Western, especially from USA, to China (Thompson, 2000). Management knowledge is not a set of unproblematic tools and techniques, which can be adapted in any context, because national culture and societal context would limit the extent to which management knowledge would be transferable and applicable (Newell, 1999).

As it can be seen in the Figure III, main differences in basic cultural values and ways of thinking between American and Chinese have been describe. Graham and Lan (2003) suggests the more hierarchical and relationship orientation of Chinese over American people. This

finding matches the high power distance in Chinese national culture; where professors are seen as a figure that students must show their respect to (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005).

Figure III. Basic cultural values and ways of thinking

| American             | Chinese               |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Individualist        | Collectivist          |
| Egalitarian          | Hierarchical          |
| Information oriented | Relationship oriented |
| Reductionism         | Holistic              |
| Sequential           | Circular              |
| Seeks the truth      | Seeks the way         |
| The argument culture | The haggling culture  |

Source: Graham and Lam, 2003

Confucianism has been influencing the ethical and moral foundation for Chinese business and social life, and profoundly influence Chinese thinking style (Martinsons and Martinsons, 1996). Confucianism shows respect for one's teachers and elders, so best students memorize and repeat professor's contents without questioning them, deriving in a normal learn-by-rote (Thompson, 2002). The former "command and control structure" in China did not stimulate the development of generic "soft" skills, and participation in decision making, so many students lacked abilities to think critically and imaginatively (Zhiwen et al, 2008). In fact, even Business Schools in China have realized that the conventional programs in management education are too theoretical and lack practical skills (Wang, 1999).

Old fashion methods as "chalk and talk" are used in China to transfer knowledge instead of other methodologies where there are discussions as problem based methods in business studies (Yan and Ehrich, 2009). Chinese society is characterized by more reverential, less disputations, memory-oriented learning style (Thompson, 2002). Students used to the traditional rote style of learning common in China may not easily adapt to the problem-oriented, open styles common in American Business Schools (Parnell et al, 2003). Teaching methods are inappropriate, the traditional approach in China being non-interactive so teaching must therefore be contextualized (Soutworth, 1999).

The class discussions are difficult to manage, especially because of two reasons. First, the Chinese culture is eminent collective so the students have fear of making a mistake and keeps many students silent (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). Second, because Confucianism promotes the modest behaviour, and individuals must learn how restrain them in order to maintain group harmony (Mortinsons and Mortinsons, 1996). Students avoid the possibility of losing face instead discussing something in critical way and even thinking in different way of the group. As

other authors suggest (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005), it should be convenient to make small groups of students in class to avoid the censure of the group.

Another possible obstacle to transfer knowledge can be the sequential and reductionism way to think of American people, compared with the circular and holistic of the Chinese (Graham and Lam, 2003). Chinese thinking is characterised by an epistemology that is biased towards dynamism and paradoxism instead the reductionism and determinism of the USA culture (Newell, 1999). Chinese discuss all issues simultaneously in apparently haphazard order –emphasizing the whole package over details (Graham and Lam, 2003), however case studies sometimes rely on argumentative student input (Thompson, 2000).

It is proposed to find a way to develop better balanced teaching cases to emphasize a more holistic approach to management education in China (Coffey and Wang, 2006). Furthermore, students used to the traditional rote style of learning common in China may not easily adapt to the problem-oriented, open styles common in American business schools (Parnell et al, 2003). The use of case studies from different countries will expose students to different business systems with varied practices in different places (Cheung, 1998). However, very few scholars have specifically investigated the impact of Asian learning traditions on management education (Thompson, 2002).

While some researchers (Wang, 1999) pointed that the Chinese MBA programmes are encouraged to adopt international textbooks, and there is an urgent need to develop case materials from Chinese industrial organizational settings. More actual investigations suggest that the holistic approach to solve problems, long-term orientation, and consensus building role of leadership that are typical of the traditional Chinese culture, have largely been replaced by an overly rationalistic, CEO-centered, strategy driven and shareholder wealth in the majority of the actual cases used in MBA programs in China (Liang and Lin, 2007). These different arguments and the problem of getting general conclusions about China should be analysed more detailed. Also, it cannot be forgotten that could be organizational conflicts between the skills given actually by business programs and the socialist market needs.

There is another hot topic in Chinese education. In big cities such as Hong-Kong or Shanghai, the education differs broadly from the one in mainland China. This is true in terms of bigger studies offer, and also in some specific educational fields. Some authors (Thomson and Gui, 2000) consider that Hong-Kong should be taken carefully as a proxy of mainland China to make inferences about business studies. However, students from Hong-Kong and mainland China look to have the same specific problems of low level of originality and limited training experiences (Martinsons and Martinsons, 1996).

Finally, it should be pay attention to the lack of textbooks translated into Chinese from English and their adaptation to the Chinese contexts. In case of textbooks in English, students

take courses in China in their mother language and they can find difficulties to follow complete courses in the lingua franca, except Hong-Kong where English is an official language (Thomson and Gui, 2000).

#### **4 Conclusions**

Marxism influences predisposed strongly the History of Chinese business education. In the one hand, contents and basis especially in some fields had different approach or did not exist. Socialism tried to make the economics as a Science working for the best interests of society, instead of making enterprises maximizing their benefits. On the other hand, Marxism delayed the implementation of Westerner programs and methods in the teaching of business until the economic reforms guided by Den Xiaoping in 1979.

In China and Eastern Europe after socialist regimes, there has been an increasing interest in the internationalization of business school curricula (Glaum and Rinker, 2002). A transition from government controlled economic system to a free market model requires not only improvement in the general educational level, but more specifically business education borrowing models from the most successful economies like American or Western European practices (Fatehi et al 2009). However, this rapid internationalization process raises the question of the effectiveness of cross-cultural education (Glaum and Rinker, 2002).

Eastern Europe, during its transition from socialist economy to market economy, found difficulties to apply these models such as a lack of tradition without qualified professors or available materials in their mother languages. China, in spite of having similar experience, had and has to overcome other challenges that ex-socialist countries in Europe did not have. Some other aspects where professors of business education should put more attention to implement contents are the next ones.

Firstly, the imported models from Western to China could not really match the socialist market economy because of the particularities of the latter. The legal and institutional framework where organizational ideas work can have different results using the same economic recipe or management tools. While ex-socialist countries jumped from socialist to market economy in Eastern Europe, the Chinese one jumped to a hybrid socialist-market economy. China's economy configures a new phenomenon to be analysed.

Secondly, China has a much more different culture compared with westerners. Most of international management models match cultures which are not characterized by the Chinese one (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). Cultural aspects of the Chinese population could influence strongly the application of those models, so it is not so sure that the models which are going to be used are useful in different cultural contexts. One possible solution is to adapt cases and theories to the Chinese context, to make small groups discussions to improve their lack of

interactivity and to use problem based learning without a closed solution to make Asian students give their holistic approach.

Thirdly, this internationalization process is being really quick. Considering that Chinese people have a specific cognitive learning process (compared with westerners) and differ from the way of thinking because of Confucianism; then the contents should be adapted in different approach using their point of view, or gradually implemented in student's curriculum for better understanding.

Finally, countries of Eastern Europe and China should be carefully compared in spite of sharing the label of ex-socialist countries. Conclusions about Chinese education can vary at length. The lack of materials and access to business contents should be partially accepted in both. However it is an error to consider China as a homogeneous analyse unit (Yan and Ehrich, 2009), to compare factors which are not scattered in uniform way along all the country. For instance, while some coast cities like Shanghai or old westerner prefectures, such as Guangzhou and Hong-Kong, can access to materials in English easier and their population manage better this language, other dispersed countryside locations do not have the same access to the same educational resources.

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## Main events which influenced business education

