

**INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN
EDUCATION EXPORT: A CASE STUDY OF FINNISH
TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR CHINESE
TEACHERS**

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The issue that this study addresses is the lack of knowledge on the impacts of different cultures in Finland-to-China education export. To address this problem, the purpose of this case study is to investigate on the cultural differences in Finland-China teacher training programmes, and the impacts of these cultural differences on the training quality. To gather data, interviews with seven Chinese teachers from different Chinese institutions and one Finnish trainer, in the case of JAMK Teacher Training Programme for Chinese Teachers, were conducted from March to October in 2018. The interviews were transcribed and analysed from a theoretical perspective of intercultural competence.</p> <p>The results showed that in the Finland-to-China education export, Chinese trainees have observed the differences of cultures between Finland and China in the aspects of trust in the society, educational traditions and practical arrangements in daily routines. Furthermore, the study indicated a lack of a proper channel for information sharing and mutual learning on the cultures of Finland and China, which led to the difficulties for Chinese trainees to understand the Finnish experiences, society and culture during the training, thus diminishing the training quality. Nevertheless, the study also suggested if the Chinese trainees and Finnish trainers can be aware of the cultural differences in advance, and take actions to overcome the cultural obstacles, the training is a mind-opening opportunity. In this case, the Chinese trainees were inclined to implement the Finnish experiences in their future work. The findings of this study can be used by Finnish higher education institutions, private educational providers for improving their educational export practices to China. The study will also contribute to promoting the educational cooperation and exchanges between Finland and China.</p>	
Keywords: Finland, China, education export, cultures, teacher training programme, cultural differences, educational quality.	
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1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter firstly introduces research background, research gap and significance of the study. Secondly, research purpose and research questions are explained. At the end of this chapter, the structure of the thesis is introduced.

1.1 Background of the research

With its outstanding performance in PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), Finnish education has attracted attention from all over the world. Many countries have shown interest to explore the reasons behind the success of Finnish education, and import the best practices of Finnish education to their own educational systems. This has made education export from Finland an emerging phenomenon in recent years. Teacher training program is one of the types of education export and cooperation. Such programs provide trainees from other countries, either based in Finland or in their home countries, valuable opportunities to understand the values, concepts and practices in Finnish education.

Over the last few decades, China has become an important international partner for Finland, both as an importer and as an exporter. China has ranked among the top four importers and the 6th top exporter in 2019 for Finland (Statistics Finland, 2019). According to Statistics Finland (2019), 7.5% of the imported products of Finland came from China in 2019, and 5.4% of exported products from Finland were sent to China. When it comes to the field of education, China has also been one of the most active importers of Finnish education (Höltkä, Pekkola & Cai 2009). Chinese degree students represented one of the largest international student groups in the Finnish higher education system in 2015 (Garam, 2016).

Meanwhile, China is actively sending Chinese young teachers abroad via overseas research and study program for young teachers in colleges and universities. The programme supports and funds to about 2 100 young teachers annually to study

abroad (CSC, 2020). However, the target group of programmes is mostly researchers and postdoctoral researchers. For other teachers in Chinese higher education institutions, there is an alternative programme for them to study abroad. The State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs (SAFEA) provides opportunities to public institutions such as schools and governmental officials to participate overseas training programme.

In recent years, Finland has been a popular destination for Chinese educational institutions for conducting teacher training programme abroad. JAMK University of Applied Sciences (JAMK) is one of the five universities of applied sciences that have School of Professional Teacher Education (AOKK, “*ammattillinen opettajakorkeakoulu*” in Finnish, previously “Teacher Education College”). According to Studyinfo (2020), the portal maintained by the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI), AOKK provides education especially towards teacher qualification for teachers in universities of applied sciences and vocational education institutions. However, according to the Studyinfo (2020) portal of Finnish National Agency for Education, the qualification obtained from universities of applied sciences can be not only used for applied higher education and vocational education, but also can be used for teaching in all education levels. The qualification education programme contains 60 ECTS studies.

Since 2017, JAMK started offering short-term teacher education to Chinese clients in Finland. I was the interpreter. After the training in JAMK’s first training programme to a Chinese principal group from Chinese polytechnics, I started my internship at JAMK. In 2018, I started working at JAMK until now as an assistant of education export. During my work, I understood that it is important to take into consideration of culture exchange and intercultural communication. This study will explore how intercultural interactions happened during the trainings, and how the interactions impact on training quality. The interviewees also gave suggestions on how short-term teacher training programme offered by Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs) can be improved in the future.

1.2 Research gap

With the increased cooperation between Finland and China, researches on topics between Finnish and Chinese education has increased in recent years. Previous studies are comparative studies on the differences of education and educational system between China and Finland.

According to the background information, it is clear that education export activities from Finland to China has been increasing. However, there is a gap between

and researches on related topics such as quality of Finnish education export, teacher training programmes, and especially researches from the cultural point of view.

Research by Hölttä et al., (2009) was one of the first researches in comparative studies between Finland and China. The study started from exploring a small training program at the University of Tampere, which is designed for administrative officials from China. and Cai (2011) discussed cross-border higher education in China and how it can be prepared by Finnish counterparts. It provided important information when Finnish HEIs want to develop a long-term cooperation with Chinese HEIs. Furthermore, Xin et al. (2014) investigated Chinese principals' in Finnish training programs and how they are impacted by the programmes. The study focused on principals' competency as well as skill development. However, studies on cultural aspect and short-term training are still limited.

1.3 Significance of the study

Culture plays an important role in international business and education export projects are not only education but also making business with foreigners. As Caprar et al. (2015) suggests "understanding the influence of culture on business operations has been one of the most enduring components of international business (IB) and international management (IM) theorizing and empirical investigation." (p.1011). But very few studies from such aspects can be found and to be utilized for understanding the current situation between Finland and China.

Thus, the study of education export between Finland and China is needed for several reasons. Firstly, the study can provide a new paradigm in the context of Finnish education export to China from cultural aspects. Second, the study can help Finnish education providers to understand needs of Chinese teacher, and finally they can improve outcomes of trainings by utilizing the study. Third, the study can help Finnish HEIs to understand and be prepared when planning a teacher training programme for Chinese clients. Upon the finding of cultural differences, the study will then find how cultural differences have influences on the quality of training.

1.4 Research purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study is to understand impacts of cultural differences in the Finnish education export to China, from a perspective of intercultural competence. This study uses case study as a research strategy to investigate Chinese participants'

experiences in teacher training programmes offered by JAMK University of Applied Sciences.

Research questions are:

1. What are the differences of Finnish and Chinese cultures for participants in Finland-China teacher training programme at JAMK?
2. How do participants perceive the impact of these cultural differences on the quality of the training?

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The thesis including six chapters. The introduction chapter consists of the background and goals of the study. Chapter 2 presents the basics of educational exports between Finland and China. Chapter 3, then describes a theoretic background of the case study as well as related literatures. The fourth chapter introduces the methodology of the study, case background and research method of the study. The fifth chapter utilize the process model of intercultural competence to analyse the findings of interviews. Finally, the sixth and seventh chapters describe findings and conclusion of the thesis.

2 EDUCATION EXPORT

This chapter will describe the basic idea of Finnish education export and how it developed in recent decades. After that, the chapter continues to introduce China's current situation on sending administrative officials, researchers and teachers abroad for training.

2.1 Finnish education export

Finnish has achieved excellent results from the tests of programme for international student assessment (PISA) during the year of 2000 to 2009 and got extensive attention from the world. In 2007, the BBC (2007) named Finland as the "superpower of education".

In 2008, Alexander Stubb, Finnish former Foreign Minister, established a branding team for Finland called "Country Brand Delegation (CBD)". Finnish education was chosen by CBD (2010), as one of the important capitals from Finland, which can be exported to the world. It is stated that "Finland has a particular opportunity to create other top-level educational products in addition to comprehensive schools and to become a major power in learning." (CBR, 2010, p. 191).

However, despite Finnish education plays an important role on the global market, Finland has not prepared for Finnish education export nor had such educational products to be exported, according to the Ministry of Education of Finland (MOE, 2010). In 2009, Ms Henna Virkkunen, the former Minister of Education and Sciences of Finland, appointed a working group to polish the strategies and outlines of education export.

As Schatz (2016) defined, education export in Finland include three aspects: selling educational equipment, selling knowledge and selling Finnish degrees,

programme, know-how to foreign countries. The forms of education in education export can be divided into two categories: contact-learning in Finland and contact-learning/distance-learning outside Finland. In this context, education export can be training a group of foreign visitors or students in Finland or in a foreign country for a short time by selling “knowledge”, or foreign students can study a whole programme to get a Finnish degree.

Education export of Finland has been developed for more than a decade. However, Finnish higher education institutions including Finnish HEIs have not performed well in global educational market. Previously, Finnish HEIs could only offer their education programs to individual students. The educational export in Finland to third parties started with the 2007 Amendments to Universities Act (1997/645) and Polytechnics Act (2003/351). Since then, Finnish Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences have the right to offer “made to order” education to foreign organization and charge a certain fee for such educational services. In 2009, Ministry of Education and Culture published Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009–2015, it is stated that

“Finnish higher education institutions are attractive and reliable cooperation partners who engage in high-quality and mutually beneficial international research, education and cultural cooperation. Higher education and expertise are nationally significant exports.” (p. 11)

Facing opportunities, Finnish HEIs started a transition towards a market-oriented approach (Cai et al., 2012).

2.2 Chinese teacher training abroad

In 2010, the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council of China published the outline of the national medium - and long-term plan for education reform and development 2010-2020, it is stated that they will

1. support a number of Chinese-foreign joint-run schools;
2. support the construction of a number of joint international laboratories and research centres in universities and colleges.
3. introduce a large number of overseas high-level talents.
4. carry out overseas research and training for school principals and key teachers.
5. support the expansion of government-sponsored overseas study programs.
6. implementing the plan to study in China and expanding the number of overseas students in China;

7. cultivate talents in various foreign languages;
8. support the development of Confucius institutes.

Therefore, the Ministry of Education (MOE) of China have been sending Chinese teachers abroad actively through different programmes, such as program of study abroad for young scholar sponsored by China Scholarship Council (CSC) and short-term teacher training programs by SAFEA, which currently is integrated into the Ministry of Science and Technology of China. In addition to fund oversea training programmes, SAFEA can recognize overseas training institutions from different countries, and such institution can be either universities, colleges or private organizations.

According to the Central People's Government of China (2011), Chinese government sent about 257 000 people abroad to do their trainings during the Eleventh Five-Year Plan of China and registered 64 foreign institutions for organizing training abroad. However, according to the Xinhuanet (2015)'s report, the number of trainees has decline to 48 000 in 2014 due to the central government' decision in their Twelfth Five-Year Plan of China.

2.3 Guidelines on organizing SAFEA's training programme

The Chinese authorities have set a guideline for selecting trainees of training abroad programme. According to SAFEA (2016)'s Guidance on training abroad during the 13th five-year plan period, there are four main aspects that people should pay attention when planning a programme.

Firstly, programme planner shall set a clear theme for the training. The theme of training shall be in line with the main functions and business scope of the organization and the areas of strength of the country or region to be visited.

Secondly, they should choose an oversea training institution. The institution shall be professional in the areas of the training theme, and both institutions shall communicate and negotiate in advance on matters such as reception and expense budget. However, SAFEA has set a limit for the budget for service provider according to the destination country.

Thirdly, the planner shall reasonably determine the time and place of overseas training. SAFEA gives prior supports to individual or small group (less than 5 people) of projects in professional and technical fields, and medium- and long-term (training duration 90 days or more) training projects. According to the actual needs, the time for overseas training shall be strictly determined, with no less than 10 days in neighbouring countries (regions) and no less than 14 days in other countries (regions).

The locations of overseas training are relatively fixed, normally the training shall be organized in no more than two cities.

Finally, the sending institution shall select trainees that match the training purpose. According to the actual needs and the requirements of strict economy, the number of members of the youth league is strictly controlled, and the number of members of the group shall be not more than 25 generally. The trainees should be the business backbone in the prime of their life in the industry or professional field. The job responsibilities and nature of work must be directly related to the training content.

Overseas education providers can register them to SAFEA's overseas training program contact and cooperation system. But the providers can still provide their services without using the system.

3 COMMUNICATION THEORY

This chapter firstly discusses the basics of intercultural competence. Secondly, the chapter explores different models of developing intercultural competence and how the process model of intercultural competence is utilized for the study.

3.1 Intercultural competence

Moeller and Nugent (2014) assert that there is no one precisely defined definition of Intercultural Competence (IC) in research literature. However, intercultural competence has been broadly defined, for example as the ability to function effectively in another culture (Dinges & Baldwin, 1996).

In this study, I follow the definition where intercultural competence is seen as the general ability to relate effectively and appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts drawing on “culturally sensitive knowledge, a motivated mindset and a skillset” (Bennett, Bennett & Allen, 2003, p. 244). Meanwhile, Leiba-O'Sullivan (1999) has noted the differences between stable and dynamic competencies. Stable competence is more consistent and enduring. On the other hand, dynamic competence can be developed through practice and education.

According to Philips (2007), people can still be incompetent in multiculturalism, when they travel abroad for short periods frequently. This study focuses how Chinese participants perceived cultural differences and how they were affected. The development of Chinese participants will be discussed with the data.

From the point of view of learning intercultural competence, Byram (1997) depicts someone who gains skills in intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as an individual who is successful in: building relationships while speaking the foreign language of the other participant; negotiating how to effectively communicate so that both individuals' communicative needs are addressed; mediating

conversations between those of diverse cultural backgrounds; and continuing to acquire communicative skills in foreign languages not yet studied. Bennett (2004) posits that a person's worldview must shift from avoiding cultural difference to seeking cultural difference.

3.2 Model of intercultural competence

There are many models of intercultural competence used for evaluating people's skills, competence, attitudes and capacities, but most of them are summaries of the literature (Spitzbeg & Cupach, 1989). Therefore, Spitzberg (2000) proposed an integrative model of intercultural competence. The model consists of three levels which analyse the intercultural competence, it includes individual system, episodic system and relational system. In this case study, we focus on participants' individual system and analyse participants intercultural competence through it. The individual system is shown as Figure 1.

Individual System	1. Communicator motivation increases, communicative competence increases.
	2. Communicative knowledge increases, communicative competence increases.
	3. Communicator skills increase, communicator competence increases

FIGURE 1 Individual system of model of intercultural competence (Spitzberg, 2000)

Spitzberg (2000) has suggested that people with more motivation, knowledge and skills are more likely to be more communicative and competent. Moreover, people can still be communicative and competent even they are competent in one or

two dimensions. As an example, one can be intercultural competent even he lacks motivation and skills, as long as his communicator skills are at a high level.

Relational System	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mutual fulfilment of autonomy and intimacy needs increases, relational competence increases. 2. As mutual attraction increases, relational competence increases. 3. As mutual crust increases, relational competence increases 4. As access to social support increases, relational competence increases. 5. As relational network integration increases, relational competence increases.
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FIGURE 2 Relational system of model of intercultural competence (Spitzberg, 2000)

Furthermore, relational system in the model proposed Spitzberg (2000) is also used to analyse participants' competences. In the context of a settled relationship, relational competences can help people to investigate one's quality level in communication.

The models suggested by Spitzberg (2000) focus more on assessing the level of people's intercultural competence. The systems will be used for leading the transcripts analyzing. However, in my study, I will first discover the cultural differences and how culture influences training programme, rather than evaluating intercultural competence of participants. Thus, the models will not be used for answering my research questions.

3.3 Integrated process of intercultural competence

In 2010, Martin and Nakayama (2010) developed a dialectical approach for understanding intercultural communication with three major paradigms:

1. Focusing on the basics of intercultural communication. For example, we should understand that cultures and people can change continuously and they are dynamic, not in a static state;
2. Understanding multi-aspects of intercultural communication and having a holistic view. People with different backgrounds, values and religions can hold different opinion or reacts differently on one thing.

3. Holding contractiory opinions simultaneously. In intercultural communication, we are not using only dichotomous thinking, more importantly, we should surpass it.

Based on the dialectical approach and Deardorff (2006)'s study, Bebenova-Nikolova (2016) suggested an integrated process model of intercultural competence (Figure 4). The model can be applied to analysis intercultural competence and communication of cultural groups and language groups.

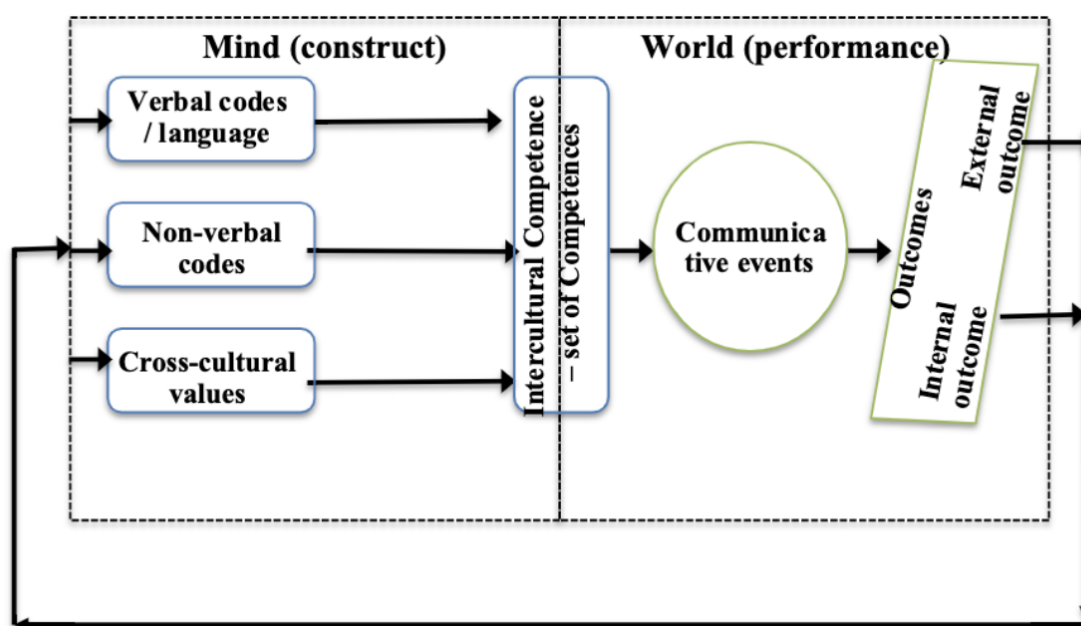


FIGURE 3 Integrated process model of intercultural competence (Bebenova-Nikolova, 2016)

The integrated model provides a clear view of how intercultural competences develop through verbal, non-verbal and cross-cultural values. This model is also easier to be used for analysing. However, to answer the research questions of this study, it is not enough that it focuses only on such elements. For this reason, the original process model of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006a) was chosen for the study.

3.4 Process model of intercultural competence

Deardorff (2006a) suggested a process model of intercultural competence, which interprets how individuals develop their capabilities on four aspects: attitudes,

knowledge, internal outcome and external outcome. The model emphasises on how attitudes, knowledge and skills lead to the internal and external outcome of intercultural competence. The external outcome of intercultural competence can be described as efficient communication and suitable behaviour in intercultural contexts. This model demonstrates an ongoing process in one's life that individuals cannot be fully intercultural competent.

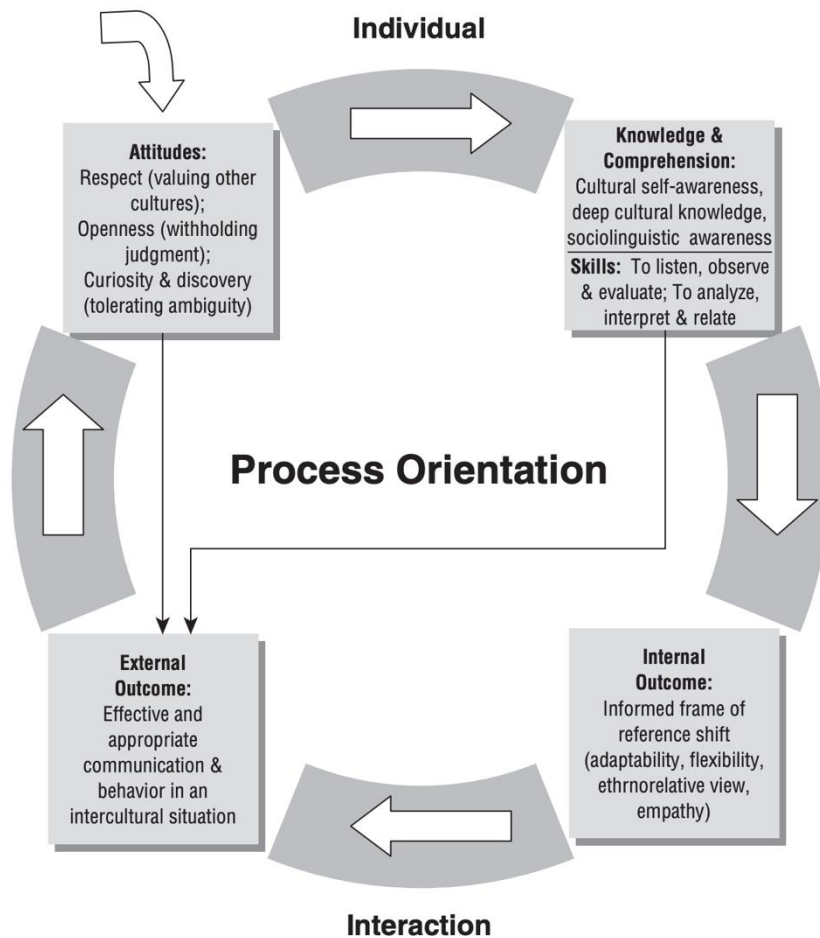


FIGURE 4 Process model of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006a, p.256)

Deardorff (2006b) reflected that attitudes toward openness, respects and curiosity are the foundation for developing one's knowledge and skills. In the second stage, knowledge means that knowledge and awareness of own culture and other culture as well as world views. Skills are one's capabilities to acquire and process the information, for example, one can observe, listen, assess, discover and analyse own culture or new culture. The third stage can be either internal outcome or external outcome as mentioned before. Internal outcomes indicate that individual develops their intercultural competence internally, that their knowledge and skills are

improved at some degrees. External outcomes then show that how individual behaviour and communicate with others after acquiring new knowledge and skills, or after internal development.

According to Deardorff (2004), this model represents two ways of process orientation. This cycle represents that the development of intercultural competence is a continuous process once people started their intercultural interaction. The first way is that people can develop themselves directly from attitudes or knowledge and comprehension to external outcome. However, due to the simplified development, effectiveness of the outcome could be weaker than people who experience the whole process cycle. In this model, Deardorff (2009) suggested that ideal external outcome is that one can achieve their aims in an efficient and suitable way of behaving and communicating.

4 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the research method is introduced. The chapter also describes the case utilized by the study, and how data was collected from interviewees by using semi-structured interviews. Moreover, the chapter explains the method of data analysis as well as ethics and validation concerning the study.

4.1 Qualitative research approach

To understand the interactions between Chinese training group and Finnish education provider, a qualitative case study was chosen for this study. Qualitative research methods could be used to deal with what, how and why questions, and be used to create rich and multiple answers (Carson et al., 2001). Stake (2010) defined that qualitative study is interpretive, experiential, and situational. Moreover, Gillham (2000) concluded that qualitative methods emphasize on the evidence we found, such as what participants are doing and what participants tell, and eventually we will understand the circumstance we studied.

Case study was chosen as the inquiry strategy for this study to highlight the interaction between Chinese participants and Finnish trainers. Scholz and Tietje (2002) discussed that case study is an approach, which is an empirical study in real-life that explores a contemporary issue. Case study can be a study which analyses a group, an individual, institution or organization, so that it focuses on a specific target (Jacobsen, 2002). Case study is used as a sociological method to explore the features and attributes of social life (Hamel, Dufour, & Fortin, 1993). According to Simons (2009), case study has been defined as an in-depth study of several aspects of the complexity and uniqueness of particular projects, policies, organizations, procedures or systems in a "real-life" circumstance. Furthermore, Thomas (2011) explained that we could use one or several methods in case studies to do analysis at different perspectives as a whole, such as people, activities, decisions, periods, and other systems. Case study also suffers weakness, as Gagnon (2010) further suggested, it consumes plenty of time

of researchers and cast participants, and it may put up an obstacle for other researchers to reproduce a case study and the results are not universal.

According to Gillham (2000), there are sub-methods under the case study methods: interviews, observing the case, documentations and analysing documents, sampling analysis and so forth. Researchers can also combine different methods to conduct a multi-method approach. Yin (2014) has pointed out that there are three types of case studies: exploratory/causal case studies, descriptive case studies and explanatory case studies. Yin (2014) further explained case studies are more suitable method for exploring “how” and “why” questions.

Single case study is chosen as the research method for this master thesis. Dyer & Yin (2014) suggests that a single case study is better than multiple cases when researchers want to investigate a specific unit such as a group or an organization. Wilkins (1991) stated that single case studies can at times provide more content and information than multi-case studies.

4.2 Research context of the case study

Education exports of Finland have increase dramatically in recent years. Previously, Centre for International Mobility (CIMO), now as the Finnish National Agency for Education (OPH, “Opetushallitus” in Finnish), has been focusing on improving educational cooperation and export between China and Finland. Many Universities of Applied Sciences in Finland have established a unit called “Global Education Services (GES)” to promote their education export activities. According to the website of JAMK’s Global Education Services (2020), it provides different solutions and services, including pedagogical training, in-service training to enterprises and development projects for educational institutions.

Apart from JAMK’s regular education and training programmes as a university of applied sciences in Finland, JAMK organizes teacher-training projects for Chinese customers and customers from all over the world all year round. Such projects include oversea teacher training in Finland, teacher shadowing project in Finland and on-site training in client’s country. Teacher-training projects are undertaken by School of Professional Teacher Education of JAMK, and are co-operated with School of Business, School of Technology and School of Health and Social Studies.

Global Education Services, an administrative unit of JAMK, promotes Finnish education export activities in the world. GES’ activities are mainly operated in China, Ethiopia, European Union, Vietnam, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. GES utilizes JAMK’s expertise to establish different projects on different levels. The units is under

JAMK's administration department, and supports JAMK's four schools to promote their international commercialized activities.

GES is in charge of customer services such as pre-plan, preparing application document to State Administration of Foreign Expert Affairs (SAFEA). When the customers come to Finland, GES coordinates the implementation of training in Finland.

JAMK can provide development services in individual, school and system level. JAMK has the ability to provide tailored programmes to meet the needs of customers. According to the webpages of GES (2020), the services of JAMK GES provides can be divided into three main categories according to the length of services:

1. Short-term projects: teacher training programme, study programme for students, and other intensive courses in a certain period. Such projects are flexible to both parties and comparatively easy to implement.
2. Middle-term projects: joint education programme, which offers Finnish degree to students in other countries. The project may require permissions from the Ministry of Education of the country where projects are implemented, so the length of project is comparatively longer.
3. Long-term projects: these projects are aiming to build a stronger connection with Finnish education institution in the target country, such as a college or a school.

The content and aim of each training are tailored according to different customers, but all programmes include the basic idea of Finnish education as well as how to improve teachers' capacity.

In this study, a total of seven participants and one trainer were interviewed. There were six female interviewees and two male interviewees. The participants came from the Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University (GPNU), Hunan Railway Professional Technology College (HRPTC) and the trainer is from School of Professional Teacher Education at JAMK.

Most participants aged at about 30 -50 and many participants have no experiences of living abroad, especially participants from HRPTC, Hunan province. However, some participants from GPNU, Guangdong province have done their training in Singapore, which is a popular destination for teacher training in the field of vocational education. All participants are either managerial staff or academic leaders in their institutions, which means that most of them are experienced in their own fields.

The basic purposes of three trainings are:

1. Getting participants familiar with Finnish education system, Finnish vocational education and curriculum;

2. Building advanced educational concept on innovation and entrepreneurship;
3. Improving practical ability of educational reforms;
4. Improving the understanding of quality system in Finland.

The program consisted about two-week training in JAMK in Jyväskylä. Sometimes similar trainings also include a 3-day training in Tampere Adult Education Center (TAKK) in Tampere, because the programmes were designed that it aimed to show more diversity of Finland to participants. So the participants would stay in Tampere for few days, and to see different educational institutions in Finland. The typical time of training of each working day is 9:00 to 16:00 and there is a 45-minute lunch break.

4.3 Data collection

The study is aimed to analyse the cultural phenomenon between the trainers and trainees during the teacher training aboard. In order to get a deepen understand of such phenomenon, the data is collected through face-to-face semi-constructed interviews. According to Galletta (2012), semi-structured interview helps us to exploring the data from participants' experiences through open-ended questions (Appendix 1) as well as theoretical driven questions. Semi structured interviews provide opportunities to ensure all questions can be responded by interviewees, so that researchers can improve comparability of studies (Bailey 1987). The interview included seven semi-constructed questions, which discussed backgrounds of participants, feelings and findings during training as well as quality aspect of the training.

All together eight individual face-to-face interviews were recorded for the study. Seven interviews were conducted with training participants from Chinese polytechnics in the ending phase of the three-week training, and language used in the interviews was Chinese, which helps the participant to express them in an efficient way. One interview was conducted with a training expert of JAMK. The environment of interviews was chosen by interviewees, most of whom chose the hotel in which they were living in Finland as the place is more convenient and comfortable for them. The interview with the Finnish interviewee was conducted at the interviewee's workplace.

To ensure that participants could understand and answer questions efficiently and accurately, all interviews with Chinese interviewees were conducted in Mandarin Chinese. The interview with the Finnish trainer was conducted in English.

Interviews lasted between 20 to 45 minutes each. The interviewer did not talk much unless the interviewees did not understand the question correctly. Here I followed the idea that researchers should avoid advising interviewees and should not judge interviewees' opinions (deMarrais, 2003). All interviewees were open to the questions and questions were answered accordingly.

TABLE 1 Basic information of interviewees

Participants	Positions	Time of interview
Participant 1	Head of Department	March 2018
Participant 2	Head of Department	March 2018
Participant 3	Director of Teaching & Research Office	March 2018
Participant 4	Project Manager	March 2018
Participant 5	Head of Department	March 2018
Participant 6	Vice-head of Department	March 2018
Participant 7	Lecturer	October 2018
Trainer 1	Principal Lecturer from Finnish higher education institution	December 2018

4.4 Data analysis

All interviews were recorded by using built-in application of a mobile phone. The audio was then transcribed by an online transcription service provider iflyrec.com. After a total of 58-page transcripts generated, the content was proofread manually with original audios. At the beginning of analysis, all interview transcripts were viewed and coded into categories which reflect the themes.

According to Berelson (1952), content analysis can be used for different purpose of studies: 1. understanding the differences of communication in an international context; 2. coding open-ended questions; 3. identifying communicator's personalities and purposes; 4. understanding organizations and social groups' social modes. Weber (1990) has provided an approach for content analysis and it suggested eight necessary steps for researchers doing analysis:

1. Recording units shall be defined. The units can be classified by different forms: word, sentence, theme, paragraph and whole text.

2. Secondly, researchers shall define the categories. In this stage, researchers shall decide if the categories are mutually exclusive or not and decide what the range of category is.
3. Coding with a small sample for testing the accuracy of category definition.
4. Assessing the codes from Step 3. Investigator should examine the reliability of the codes.
5. Revising the coding rules. The rules should be modified when the reliability of codes is low.
6. Back to coding with a small sample repeatedly to achieve a high reliability.
7. Investigator can apply the coding rules to the whole text.
8. Assessing the reliability and clarity of codes of whole text. (Weber, 1990, p.7-8)

The data was analysed by following the steps mainly mentioned above. There are some basic themes and topics have been mentioned and generated, during the time of interviews and data transcribing. To analyse the interviews thematically, the units of analysis are set to themes. The categories are designed according to the research questions of this thesis. The first research question explores cultural differences participants received during the training. Therefore, the first category is cultural differences between China and Finland in short-term teacher training programme. It explores what happened during the training and reflects participants thoughts and how their intercultural competences developed. Such content represents the attitudes and knowledge phases of the process model of intercultural competence. The second research question focuses on how culture impacts on the quality of training. Thus, the second category describes the quality of trainings. This part discusses the internal and external outcome in the process model, and it focuses on the gains of programme and evaluation to the programme.

In sum, a total of two main categories and eight sub-themes (Table 2) helped analysing the data systematically, and the data can show what are the cultural differences as well as how they effect on the quality.

TABLE 2 Category for interview analysis.

Category	Sub-category	Themes
Cultural differences between China and Finland	Attitudes	1. Differences on social background of two countries
	Knowledge and skills	2. Lack of knowledge and information of Finnish culture 3. Trust and power 4. Differences on training and learning models
Quality of the programme	Internal outcome	5. Needs of participants - standardised programme 6. Lunch break 7. How Culture Effects on Quality of Training
	External outcome	8. Quality

4.5 Ethical consideration and validation strategies

4.5.1 Ethical consideration

The ethical consideration of this study is guided by the Guidelines for Responsible Conduct of Research and Procedures for Handling Allegations of Misconduct in Finland (Guidelines of RCR) (TENK, 2013). The process of this study based on three principles of Guidelines of PCR: voluntary participation and general consent; avoiding harm; protection of privacy and data (National-Advisory-Board-on-Research-Ethics, 2009). To be more specific, all participants participated the interviews voluntarily and they agreed on the use of data of interview. The Secondly, the study was conducted by avoiding harm. Since the group size is quite small, all data which

can be referred to a specific person are manipulated to avoid social harm. Thirdly, the data is collected and protected by complying with the Guidelines of PCR.

4.5.2 Validation strategy

To validate this study, I followed Creswell (2004)'s six strategies for ensuring internal validity as following:

1. Triangulation of data - Data will be collected through multiple sources to include interviews, observations and document analysis;
2. Member checking - The informant will serve as a check throughout the analysis process. An ongoing dialogue regarding my interpretations of the informant's reality and meanings will ensure the truth value of the data;
3. Long terms and repeated observations at the research site - Regular and repeated observations of similar phenomena and settings will occur on-site over a four-month period of time;
4. Peer examination - a doctoral student and graduate assistant in the Educational Psychology Department will serve as a peer examiner;
5. Participatory modes of research - The informant will be involved in most phases of this study, from the design of the project to checking interpretations and conclusions; and
6. Clarification of researcher bias - At the outset of this study researcher bias will be articulated in writing in the dissertation proposal under the heading, "The Researcher's Role." (p. 211)

To validate this study, I followed three strategies from above. Firstly, this study is done with my continuing observation during the trainings, and via semi-structured interviews and transcribed documents. Moreover, I have observed similar training programme many times, so that such phenomenon described in the study are comparatively universal and follow a similar pattern. There is bias from me because I am working at JAMK university of applied sciences, and I was working with the training groups for the whole training period. Participants may speak differently to me since I am also representing JAMK. However, the long-time accompany provided me a good chance to understand what the participants really think, and they also expressed that it was easy to say something true to me.

5 FINDINGS

The chapter firstly shows the findings of data analysis, then the findings are discussed to response research questions of the study by utilizing the process model of intercultural competence.

5.1 Attitudes

In this category, the study analyses interviewees' attitudes, knowledge and skills in intercultural activities. To discover cultural differences Chinese participants have perceived, interview questions were asked for getting to know interviewees' background and their opinions on Finnish and Chinese culture. Furthermore, interviewees' development of intercultural competence is analysed with the process model of intercultural competence to see if interviewees were able to adapt or adjust to Finnish culture.

5.1.1 Differences on social background of Finland and China

Both participants and the trainer were aware of cultural differences, and saw the backgrounds of their home countries being quite different from each other. However, participants' understanding of cultural differences are different from the Finnish trainer.

When participants talked about the Finnish society, they often mentioned that Finland has an equal and highly trusted society. Participant 2 indicated that he has a deep understanding of equality and trust in Finland after the training. Before the training, he could only imagine the situation in Finland with the information from news and books. On the other hand, Participant 1 suggested that Finnish equality is

based on population, resources and taxation of the country. She further expressed that it is difficult for China to reach such standard.

“The whole society of Finland is quite equal, as we understood, people can use different resource of the society, especially education and medical services, everyone in the society can get them. But the taxation is very heavy here. So there is less differences between the poor and the rich. [...] Whereas there is a rather big gap between them [in China?]. This is the biggest difference between China and Finland from my point of view, and it causes inequality and distrust in the society. [...] We lack resources in China, so people have to compete with others to get more resources.”

Many interviewees mentioned that Finnish institutions shall consider China’s national conditions when designing and conducting a training programme. It is clear that participants want the programme being more customized. Participant 3 suggested the training group had an internal discussion on the topic of how Chinese education could adopt Finnish experience under a certain value. It is clear that China has a different system and value, and these elements were fighting with Finnish counterparts in the participants’ mind during the first two weeks.

Secondly, there are differences on living and learning style, and the group had to adjust to the new style with three weeks. One important issue was raised by many participants was the lunch break. This issue will be discussed separately later because it plays an important role when we talk about training quality. In addition to lunch break, participant 5 noticed the differences value of learning in Finland is more independent, people can freely choose what they want to study. However, Chinese institutions and teachers prefer employing “cramming education”, which means the educator feeding students and trainees with numerous information.

On the other hand, the Finnish trainer stated that “I kind of think that there are differences between our cultures and ways of thinking about education and about our values and everything. But on the other hand, I have feeling that we all are different”. We could see that the Finnish trainer has the understanding of encountering different culture, and the trainer is trying to minimize cultural conflicts. Moreover, the trainer pointed out that how she develops herself when encountering culture differences.

“We have kind of for expectations of different culture that you know that for example you telling me that what how Chinese people are, but in the same sentence or you continue quite often saying that: okay, but you know, in this part of the country, they are different than in this part of the country. The same with us that somehow I have thought that I tried to kind of not think about so much about the now I am talking with a Chinese person” Finnish trainer

From above discussion, we can see that cultural differences impacted more on Chinese participants rather than the Finnish trainer. The data showed that Chinese participants were discovering cultural differences during their training. According to the process model of intercultural competence, Chinese participants went through the phase 1 “Attitudes” and phase 2 “Knowledge and Comprehension”. They were

curious to Finnish culture and they discovered the differences by listening and observing.

5.2 Knowledge and skills

5.2.1 Lack of knowledge and information of Finnish culture

Participants of training programmes usually had preliminary introduction to Finnish basic information before they came to Finland. However, most interviewees responded that they did not receive enough introduction to Finnish culture. Few of them tried to read some materials and books to understand Finland. Nevertheless, the information from different sources only provided them very narrow viewpoints, such as geographical information, data of population and economics.

“I knew only a few things about Finland, and most information comes from a face-to-face presentation from Business Finland, which gave us some general understanding of Finland before our trip. The content includes Finnish politics, Finnish people and society, etc.”
Participant 6

“I did some research on Finland and also got some advice from my friends who have visited Finland”. Participant 2

According to the results of interview, participants have the idea that Finnish is doing well in education, but Finland is not a familiar country to Chinese participants. Interviewees had to do extra research or reading to get a basic idea of Finland. Before their trip to Finland, they had a short session in which Finland was introduced with politics, Finnish people and some statistics of Finland. Some parts of Finnish culture were also introduced sauna and population, but participants were still unsure what kind of culture Finland has. To get a better understanding of Finland, participants also tried to search information by themselves online.

It is clear that interviewees were open to Finnish culture and they somehow tried to discover Finland before they entered to the new environment. Moreover, participants have also expressed that the training content would be easier to understand if they have known Finnish culture better before their training. The topic will be discussed later.

5.2.2 Trust and power distance

Power distance is the first dimension in Hofstede’s six dimensions. This dimension measures acceptance of inequality in the target society. Currently, there are about 76

countries have been listed in Hofstede's power distance index (PDI) as well as other dimensions, and each country has its scores in every dimension. PDI's score ranges from 0 (smaller power distance) to 100 (bigger power distance), China scored 80 out of 100 in the PDI and has been placed in the higher ranking. The score reveals that inequality is more likely accepted. However, Finland's score is only about 33, which indicates that Finnish characteristics are being independent and equal.

Trust has been a key concept when it comes to Finnish education. Aho et al. (2006) stated that trust in Finnish education means that the Finnish education authorities trust their educational workers, such as teachers, rectors and even student's parents, know how to provide best education to their children and the youths. In this Finnish context, trust was an important topic in overseas teacher-training programme at JAMK.

"When I was shopping in grocery store, I found people should weigh their foods and put the price tag on it by themselves, there was no staff who monitor and manage such things. This would be impossible in China, where such things are done by staff of the supermarket. I think this is trust between people." Participant 1

"Even though China has made huge progress in building a cultural society in recent years, there is still a gap between China and Finland. For example, people are more likely to trust each other and take their responsibility in Finland. ... In school management of Finland when we talk about trust and taking responsibility in the society." Participant 2

"I did not notice (before training) that trust and responsibility are really rooted in the society." Participant 3

Chinese interviewees also reflected on their own culture with the trust in Finnish society, they mentioned that people in Finland are more likely to trust each other, which is one of the bases of Finnish culture. To understand Finnish education and Finnish education, it is important to understand this phenomenon and learn from Finnish culture.

"The Finnish government trusts schools and teachers trust their students. ...In China, we think subjectively that people will not behave properly, this is one reason why we have a series of inspection and monitor on different levels." Participant 5

"In Finland, I felt that education and educational management shares the same value of trust and responsibility. The value of such sometimes is not matched in China." Participant 2

During the interview, participants perceived differences on power distance between Finland and China. In China, people usually are placed according to their jobs, age or position. A participant suggested that such culture in China was adopted from Confucius' thoughts of the levels of "Heaven-earth-sovereign-parent-teacher" (from high to low), that the six elements are the highest in one's life, even teacher is the last one.

On the one hand, people were divided into different classes, and certain classes enjoy more respect. For example, nowadays the sovereign class becomes leaders of a

department or an institution, even they do not have more rights and are not dominating other people. On the other hand, the situation helps teachers being more respected in Chinese society, because teacher is one of the classes that being more respected in the society.

“We had a welcoming dinner at the beginning, and the speech that Finnish leader made is completely different from China. We have a certain routine to do this kind of welcome speeches according to speakers’ position.” Participant 3

One participant also directly pointed out that people are more equal to each other in Finland. The participant was asked if he has a new understanding of Finnish culture, and he expressed he understood the equality in Finland better.

“I feel the relationship between people is very equal, although people have different positions and jobs. People would not think they are superior to others, and they would not feel that subordinates must follow their command and must compliment the leaders.” Participant 7

Apparently, this part showed that participants’ understanding of Finnish culture were in more depth. In general, participants experiences that people in Finland are equal and trusted. As mentioned in Chapter 3.5, the power distance in Chinese culture is greater than Finnish culture. Chinese participants explored such differences by themselves and pointed out during the interviews. However, the difference on power distance has not been an obstacle for them, as no participants complained on it.

5.2.3 Differences on training and learning models

The issue of differences on training model has been raised by Chinese interviewees many times during those interviews. For Chinese interviewees, a standardized training would be more acceptable. However, the Finnish institution were willing to provide more flexible and diverse training to Chinese participants.

Most of the interviewees have perceived differences on teaching models between Finland and China. The types of model can be linked to teaching, interactions between teachers and schools, communication in daily life and so on.

“When we were observing Finnish class, I felt that Finnish students were able to discuss with their peers freely. I think this is something different from our culture and idea. In Finland, people accepted this model.” Participant 4

“In China, there is a kind of Huddling Culture among students. Some students always think that their peers in team would finish the teamwork anyway, so they do not need to do anything. What teachers in China can do is giving more inspection to students? But it seems that most of students and teachers in Finland are willing to take their responsibility.” Participant 6

The Finnish trainer also suggested that the design of training project is partly based on the location. "When we have training here in Finland, the participants want to see how we are doing things, so we have more visits", this situation makes the training more difficult for organizers. Correspondingly, the trainer thinks it is easier to do training in China because the host institution will take care of practicality and Finnish trainer can focus on the training.

5.3 Internal outcomes

5.3.1 Needs of participants - standardised programme

Teacher training programmes have been highly recommended by the participants during the interview. The programmes did improve participants' competences and provided them a new understanding of education by multiple ways such as lectures, visits and workshop.

However, some participants felt that the training should be more standardised, according to their experiences in China. Chinese participants expressed their opinions of standardised programme and education unconsciously that they prefer a more standardised programme, but on the other hand they think standardised education limits people's idea and thinking.

"Finnish teachers are not following a certain routine to teach. Sometimes we would wonder why the teaching is not systematic and logical. Our teaching (in China) is standardised, our curriculum is standardised, and we have a fixed plan of teaching. Everything has a standard. I remember we asked a lecturer how to use experiential teaching, and he said that we could do it and experience it. After we had a tasted of experiential teaching, he said that this is the answer. We felt that we did not get the idea because the lecturer did not tell us how to implement experiential teaching step by step. If we were in China, we would point the process of experiential teaching out. What I would like to stress is that the lecture which is not standardised or normative may affect our understanding of lecture." Participant 3

At the same time, Participant 3 pointed out the cons of standardised and normative thinking. She suggested that Chinese are used to thinking with standardization and norms, which is why Chinese participants are not receiving the information, concepts and ideas very well from Finnish lecturer. Moreover, Participant 2 suggested that it would be ideal that JAMK can offer a standardised training programme.

"I suggest JAMK can divide the training into different modules, so we can choose the modules that we are interested in, e.g. culture, teaching method and curriculum setting. The modules can be a menu for us, and we could order different modules in a package. The implementation would be easier to JAMK with this method." Participant 2

Participant 2 indicated that JAMK can utilize the module programme in the future with international customers. However, the Finnish trainer expressed that she does not want to provide a *hyllytuote* (“off-the-shelf item” in English) to the customers:

“I would like to do the program that could somehow take into account the needs of client. Would it be an individual education organization, or ministry or some authority. So we could tailor the program. There are the same main elements all the time. But we are trying to find out what is the kind of thing that they are interested in. Finally, we would like to help them to use the training experiences so that they can improve their own practices.” Finnish trainer

According to JAMK’s experiences, the programme is always designed according to the institutional needs and it should be approved by Chinese authorities, which means that participants are not involved at the designing phase. As a result, we can find that participants from China are expecting a more standardised programme, and Finnish trainers want to provide tailored programme to participants at the same time. However, this does not mean that participants have a different opinion with Finnish trainer, we could do more coordination at the programme designing phase to meet requirements of both parties. Fowler and Blohm (2004) suggested that customization can be a big change or a slight adjustment, but it is always important to be done. In other words, almost all trainers shall customize their products and services according to the client’s needs.

5.3.2 Lunch break

Unlike other cultural differences, most of Chinese interviewees has raised a crucial problem that they faced in Finland and affected their learning quality: lunch break was too short for them compared with the duration in China.

“The training was quite intensive for me. In China, we always have a longer lunch break for a nap when we design a training programme.” Participant 6

“When we are working in Finland that we have shorter lunch breaks. This is a question of how we take into account a culture that people in China seem to prefer to have a longer break during the day with this. A question of how they can concentrate on, that is a very practical question.” Finnish trainer

“People were complaining that Finnish foods are quite different for them, and we also felt bad that we did not have time for a nap. Those things obviously have affected the quality.” Participant 1

“Chinese are used to have a nap at noon. In this programme, we had only one hour for lunch and then continue our session. We could not achieve a good learning quality with the short lunch break, even if the Finnish lecture was doing well.” Participant 1

A participant who mentioned this problem has also expressed his understanding of Finnish culture that it is difficult for the host institution to set a naptime, because daily working hour in Finland is different from China.

The trainer has noticed the problem during the training and mentioned this situation in interview when the trainer was talking about participants' behaviour.

"When we are working in Finland, we have shorter lunch breaks. This is a question of how do we take into account a culture that people in China seem to prefer to have a longer break during the day. A question of how they can concentrate on, that's a very practical question"
Finnish trainer

Kim (2001) suggested that everyone is facing the challenges of new environment and is trying to adapt the new environment, regardless of the length of the staying. Apparently, lunch break is an important issue for Chinese participants in Finnish training programmes, which Finnish institutions should pay attention to and try to solve when doing Finnish education export, especially in intensive training programmes. The case shows that both Finnish trainer and Chinese participants were aware of this issue, and they tried to solve the problem. For example, Finnish trainers did some physical excerscies with the participants in the aftertnoon, and Chinese participants tried to drinking coffee and so on. Nevertheless, the findings of interviews still show that the shortness of lunch break still affected the quality of training.

5.3.3 The perceived impact of cultural differences on the training

Most interviewees think that they learned many things during the programme and cultural interactions provided them new idea and thoughts. However, the interviewees expressed that in their opinion, cultural differences still have affected the quality of training, and there are certain things that could be developed in the future. Positives effects could be divided to two categories: organisational effects and personal effects. Interviewees have expressed that their capacity have been improved through cultural encounters, and they are willing to improve their organization.

According to interviewees, they have experienced many times that Finnish culture collided with Chinese culture, from lectures and visiting different places to daily life. Even though Chinese participants did not understand or even do not agree with some Finnish ideas and concepts, they still think this kind of cultural collisions would benefit them and help them to reflect on themselves as well as the schools where they work.

“During the training, we have done a lot of comparisons between Finland and China, and we actually have been unconsciously influenced through those comparisons. The trainer from JAMK and TAKK also demonstrated their commitment to us and they made me to reflect. ... I also noticed that in Finnish culture, people are more focus on actions and quality rather than different indicators made from inspections.” Participant 6

“I believe that the cultural difference has improved the training quality. The trading was planned well, and we had enough time to understand Finnish culture and to know the root of Finnish culture. Those will help us to adopt the values when we make our teaching plan when we come back to China. So such differences are beneficial.” Participant 2

“I think there were conflicts of values between us and Finland, and even between the participants. But I also believe conflicts have a positive effect on us. Without such conflicts, we would always think that education in China is doing a great job and the authorities are always making great decisions. We usually think national system prevent us from adopting western values, but I think the principle of education is universal to both China and Finland.” Participant 3

According to the participants, they were open to learn about Finnish culture and they would like to implement their studies from Finland into their institution in China. In this circumstance, cultural differences are beneficial to their organizational development even if such differences are sometimes conflicting with their values. Meanwhile, cultural differences also were seen as bringing more value to participants’ personal development.

“We already knew many concepts before coming to Finland, such as student-centered learning and school-company cooperation. However, I found that those concepts are not only concepts but also practices in Finland. This experience has affected us imperceptibly. ... We were asked to write what has influenced us during the summary lecture, my answer is value and idea from Finland. ... I believe we could reflect us and improve our competence better with more collision and conflicts of ideas, and after that we will make some changes.” Participant 3

Negative effects. More than half of the interviews has pointed out that culture have affected the quality of training, main reasons are the value of society, language and differences between Finnish and Chinese customs.

Three participants felt that Finnish culture and society are the root of Finnish education, people trust each other and enjoy more equality and freedom of perform their work. The situation is not same in China so that it is difficult to implement or adapt Finnish education in their home institutions.

“People (in the group) felt the difference of culture when we discuss how Finns educated their people. They could do it in that way because of their culture background. However, we do not have such culture in Chinese society, and we are unable to do such things in our schools. ... Because of the difference, we would somehow think that some parts of the training are not usable for us.” Participant 6

“For example, the freedom of discussion in lecture and school’s quality assurance are based on Finnish culture, people in Finland accept such models of doing things. ... We feel that such models are incomprehensible based on our culture and value and we could not achieve our goals by Finnish way.” Participant 4

As the Participant 4 pointed out, participants may try Finnish practices in China, however, the outcome could be unsatisfactory. The differences between Finnish culture and Chinese culture have lowered the quality of training. A participant also mentioned the national condition as a whole:

“From my understanding, the biggest difference is the condition and situation of our nation are hugely different from Finland’s. ... We have huge population in China, and we do not have enough resource, people are striving to development and resource so that we are always competing with each other. This situation makes us enjoy less trust in the society.” Participant 1

In addition to the differences mentioned before, several participants mentioned negative effects of language and communication, such reasons include misunderstanding of translation, interpretation and difficulties of speaking English. The Finnish trainer reflected that there are two obstacles which effected quality and communication of training.

The first is English language, the participant had to receive the information from interpreters and translated materials, and sometimes we were struggling with definitions and we spent a lot of time to understand a concept. Brown and Lenneberg (1965) noted that, language is not only a tool for communication, but also can be used to facilitate cultural processes. The second obstacle is difference of ways of thinking, this could be linked to the thoughts of Participant 3 in 7.3.1 as well.

“Even we have learned English, but we are still thinking in a Chinese way. We could not understand Finland and Finnish people because of such differences. ... Those obstacles affected the quality of training negatively to some extent.” Participant 7

Participant 1 indicated that she had a problem of communication due to the problem of using English language. She felt that she did not have chance to communicate with Finnish people. Sometimes she was helped by interpreters, but it provided her less feeling of cross-cultural communication.

Meanwhile, the trainer raised the same issue, “It is suprising that we come to discuss about words, the meaning of words. Because we always have three languages at least, Mandarin Chinese, English and Finnish. The meaning of English words seems to be different for us”. The Finnish trainer mentioned the meaning of working-life (työelämä in Finnish) has been discussed a lot during the trainings. “The meaning of the Finnish-English word is different from how Chinese people understand it”.

According to the interviews, cultural factors have affected the quality and delivery of the training to some extent. The influences are perceived through daily communication, lectures and programme arrangement. The communication between Chinese participants and Finnish trainer was limited by language, even there was translation and interpretation. Such obstacles in communication limited participants’ performing of learning outcome.

5.4 External outcomes: quality

Firstly, some participants noticed that cultural differences improved the quality of programme. Because cultural differences provided them opportunities to open discussions and brainstorming. Participant 3 noted that “Some of Chinese teachers think that we cannot learn from Finland, because it has a different system from China. But I think this is not the case, I think we need collision and conflicts when we are thinking. These help us to reflect on ourselves and then we can somehow be changed.”

Secondly, as mentioned before, cultural interaction effected the quality of training programmes both positively and negatively. On the last stage of interview, participants were asked to give feedback on quality of training programme as well as grading the programme in general. Most participants graded the programme as an excellent programme and some participants have given a grade of 85 points out of 100 (Participant 2, 4, 5, and 6). It is clear that participants are satisfied with the quality and the training in general.

“The training programme opened a window of Finnish education for us, and the size of window is huge. I believe the quality of this programme is excellent. [...] We did have difficulty because of cultural differences. But I understood that we have 26 participants in the group, JAMK cannot fulfil everyone’s requirements and expectations. I would say we reached 80% of our goals, there is still 20%, which is something related with my own field and I understood that it is difficult to arrange such content. In general, I would give 80-90 points out of 100 to the programme.” Participant 5

“I would give 80-85 points out of 100. [...] The training has met my expectation and my goal. I would recommend my colleagues to participate this training again.” Participant 6

The trainer also mentioned that participants said that they were satisfied with the training and they have got good ideas which they would like to use in their own work. Nevertheless, participants still gave critical comments to the training programme and to help JAMK’s further development on future training. Such comments focused on programme organizing and planning.

In general, the training programmes received good feedbacks and Chinese participants thought they achieved what they expected.

6 DISCUSSION

In this chapter, based on the findings in Chapter 5, I will continue to discuss and answer the proposed research questions:

1. What are the differences of Finnish and Chinese cultures for participants in Finland-China teacher training programme at JAMK?
2. How do participants perceive the impact of these cultural differences on the quality of the training?

6.1 Cultural differences

Participants have experienced many cultural differences during the training, such as trusts in the society, lunch break and differences on training models between Finland and China. On the one hand, cultural difference causes some inconvenience to Chinese participants, for example, short lunchbreak reduces the effectiveness of studying in the afternoon. On the other hand, cultural difference brings curiosity to participants, which makes them more interested in Finnish culture and training content.

In order to see how cultural difference impacts on Finnish trainers, future studies may compare Finnish training programmes that are implemented both in China and in Finland.

6.2 Chinese participants' attitudes, knowledge and skills in overseas training

Based on the process model of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006), attitudes are the starting point of the process. The second step is knowledge and skills, which describe individual's cultural self-awareness, cultural knowledge and competence of gathering information. But individual can skip the whole process to achieve external outcome from attitudes or knowledge and skills directly. This study will analyse how participants went through the whole process and how it impacted the training programme.

The first element of attitudes is respecting and valuing other culture. From the interview, it is clear that most Chinese participants respected Finnish culture before and during the training. Secondly, we could see that participants were open and curious to Finnish culture even before the trips to Finland. Participants stated that cultural training could be helpful for them in improving their training outcomes. One interviewee mentioned that

It is clear that there is lack information of Finland in China, and Chinese participants are facing difficulties to understand Finnish culture before experiencing it. The situation became a cultural obstacle during the training. Interviewees reflected that there are many things they could not understand until they noticed the cultural background behind it. To solve the problem, Finnish trainer may provide more pre-training to foreign participants in the future.

6.3 Internal and external outcomes and their effects on quality

According to Deardorff (2006), internal outcomes focus on individual's informed frame of reference shift, and external outcomes describe whether communication and behaviour are effective and appropriate in an intercultural context. In addition, internal outcomes will affect on attitudes, which is the new beginning of next cycle. This part will first discuss training participants' changes and how they reacted to cultural differences in the overseas programmes, and then to discover how the outcomes reflected on participants' attitudes and quality of training.

The results of interviews showed that participants were able to adjust themselves. Cultural obstacles apparently impacted on the willingness of study of participants in the afternoon sessions. Moreover, the data analysis suggest that participants have seen cultural conflicts between their own culture and Finnish culture. The understanding

of some education ideas was against the value of Chinese education. However, participants stated that the conflicts and comparisons positively affected them.

In addition to participants internal development, they also mentioned that they would like to utilize the experiences from Finland in their own work, because the new culture has provided them a new way of thinking, that it is important to introduce new things to Chinese education.

To summarize, the study found out cultural differences in oversea training programme from Finnish HEIs to their Chinese clients, and then analyzed the development intercultural competence of Chinese participants during the training. The results showed that the quality of training programme were affected by cultural differences and competence of Chinese teachers and the quality can be improved as their competence improved.

In general, the study showed that Chinese participants have solved the cultural challenges during their training in Finland, and they are satisfied with the training outcome. Finnish trainers and education providers can benefit from improving their training design by adapting their client's culture. More importantly, Finnish education providers can implement pre-training on Finnish culture to improve the quality of training afterward.

7 CONCLUSION

This chapter begins with a summary of the study, and continues with the discussion on its limitation and implications. Based on that, I also propose avenues for future research.

7.1 Summary of the study

Finland has been expanding the scale of exporting Finnish education in recent decade. Meanwhile, the Chinese authorities are trying to send more teachers and officials abroad to be trained by foreign experts. It is needed to study and consider the intercultural interactions in such contexts when Finnish culture and education get in touch with Chinese system and clients in Finland. The consideration shall start when a programme is being designed, so that both parties can achieve better outcome and benefit from the cooperation. This study tried to answer two questions: what are cultural differences that happened in the training programme and How have the cultural differences in Finnish educational export programme to China influenced on the quality of training program?

The first question focus on exploring the cultural differences that Chinese teachers felt during short-term teacher training programmes. Interview questions firstly concerned the background of participants' previous intercultural encounter and oversea training experiences. The results show that many interviewees have been somehow in intercultural environment. However, most interviewees did not know Finland and Finnish culture very well before the training. The service provider JAMK and other parties has provided a pre-training to the training group in China, but interviewees stated that the training provided only a very broaden view of Finland, and it is difficult to understand Finnish culture through it. The interviewees were asked if they have new understanding of Finnish culture, many responses are positive

toward the question. Respondents noted that it is hard to understand Finnish trust and equality by reading or being-taught, but they experienced it in Finland.

The differences between Finland and China realized by interviewees are mostly related to training and Finnish education. The situation is resulted due to trainings were designed in accordance with guideline of the Chinese authorities, that training programme cannot contain other activities such as visiting attractions, local cultural events and entertainments. Nevertheless, we could still see how trainees developed in the development process of intercultural competence. Participants were able to respect and be open to Finnish culture. Then they have deepened their awareness of Finnish culture, and even can utilize their experiences to reflect on their own culture.

Secondly, participants rated the teacher education programmes as high quality trainings. Interviewees were asked about their feelings on cultural differences and how differences impact on the quality of training. This part reflects the internal outcome and external outcome of the process model of intercultural competence. Interviewees were able to detect such differences between China and Finland. Some differences are positive impact, and some are not.

The positive impacts came from participants' own reflection and comparison during the intercultural involvement. Intercultural interactions helped them to broaden their understanding of education in China as well as their daily life. Negative impacts from cultural point of view are more noticeable than positive impacts. Participants faces some cultural conflicts such as lunch break and training models. However, the negative impacts can only be solved when Finnish institution are able to make changes to their system.

In sum, this study provides a clear review on what are the demands in teacher training programme in Finland, from Chinese cultural point of view. It also demonstrates that cultural differences do have impacts on the quality of training. Furthermore, the results also include professional suggestions on promoting the design of training. Finnish higher education institutions and private education providers can utilize the findings of this study for improving their training services for Chinese clients.

7.2 Limitations and future research

This study has limitations in several aspects.

Firstly, this study focuses on short-term teacher training programme, which means that all participants stay only about 2-3 weeks in Finland. The participants could be in the honeymoon period of experiencing a new culture. Consequently, interviewees may perceive more positive aspects of Finnish culture and training in

Finland. On the other hand, participants had less time to experience Finnish culture as a whole. From the planning aspect, the training is designed according to SAFEA's guideline on oversea training programme. The programme shall contain only teaching-related activities and services, but it shall not contain travel trips and entertainments. In this case, the programme is not designed according to real participants.

Therefore, the study is suitable to be utilized mostly for organizations in Finland that can organize SAFEA's programme. More specifically, the Finnish organizations mean five schools of professional teacher education of Universities of Applied Sciences in Finland and other public institutions. However, the utilization of this study for non-SAFEA programmes are somehow limited, because they can provide multiple services according to participants needs.

Secondly, most interviews were done one day before the ending of training programme. The participants have not finished their session of summary and reflections, which is one of the most important parts of their training. In the training period, the interviewer has been with teacher groups all the time. The situation can also affect on the results of interview. The situation can be improved by using post-programme questionnaires, but it is difficult to collect because most participants do not have time and it requires JAMK's permission to send questionnaires to all participants.

Thirdly, the lack of supporting studies in teacher training programme between Finland and China, especially from the intercultural point of view. Xin and Fred (2014) has studied on the training programme for Chinese principles in Finland. Xu (2019) followed another principle group in TAMK to examine the leadership development. However, as the market of Finnish training is still expanding in China, it is lacking related researches to improve the quality.

In the future, the intercultural interactions between Chinese clients and Finnish training providers can be studied further to examine and improve quality of services. The thesis focused on the aspect of Chinese clients. Therefore, future study can also follow more on how Finnish trainers feel the training programme and what can be improved from the Finnish point of views.

In addition, comparative studies between SAFEA programmes and non-SAFEA programmes can be made to investigate which one produces better quality. In this thesis, JAMK's SAFEA programmes were designed strictly according to SAFEA's guideline, so that training participants came to Finland for purely studying. It is needed to examine whether other services combined with training can improve the quality of teacher training. However, the results of such studies may only be useful on planning of non-SAFEA programme due to the strict regulations of SAFEA.

7.3 Implications of the study

The study demonstrates a practical result of how Chinese trainees are affected by culture during their training in Finland. Past studies in educational fields between Finland and China are mostly comparative studies. Whereas this study discusses cultural influences in Finnish education export, and it provides an opportunity to Finnish educational institutions to understand how Chinese trainees think and what they need when they are taking short-term training in Finland.

Finnish education providers and related institutions could utilize this study to optimize the design and the quality of training programmes for their Chinese clients. However, the results are not universal to every group from China, as we can detect different needs and views from the interviews.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview questions

Interview questions in Chinese:

1. 你来芬兰前，对芬兰文化有哪些了解？
2. 你之前有没有出国培训过？
3. 在过去两周的培训过程中，你对芬兰文化有哪些新的理解？
4. 你觉得中芬文化有哪些差别？在培训的过程中你有没有体会到中芬文化的差异？
5. 你觉得，中芬的文化差异有没有影响到这个项目的质量？有哪些影响？
6. 您如何评价这个培训项目的质量？
7. 从文化交流的角度，您会希望项目在哪些方面作出改善？

Interview questions in English:

1. What did you know about Finnish culture before coming to Finland?
2. Have you been in any oversea training?
3. In past weeks, do you have any new understanding of Finnish culture?
4. What are the differences between Finnish culture and Chinese culture? Did you feel any differences during the training?
5. Do you think cultural differences have affected the quality of the training project? What are the effects?
6. How do you appraise the quality of this training project?
7. From the perspective of cultural communication, what would you suggest for improving the training projects?

Appendix 2: Research permission form

I am aware that JIAN CAO 's research interest lies in the study in Finnish Education Export to China, I give my permission to use textual and audio materials produced during the interview.

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH DATA ARCHIVING

I give my permission to use textual and audio materials for archiving for the use of research.

I understand that data protection is covering, for example, personal details deleted from files and research publications.

I know that the permission for research data archiving is possible to cancel with a written announcement to the researcher.

_____ (place), _____ (date)

Signature, respondent

Signature, researchers