

Story 9: Student Xie Zhongwen, four treasures of the study

In old China, scholars cherished the four treasures of the study (zhi, mo, bi, yan), which were paper, inkstick, brush, and inkwell. When I thought about college, I too wanted to grow up to cherish the four treasures. I had won a calligraphy prize in middle school and my Chinese teachers said I showed real talent. They encouraged me to study ancient poetry, but my scores were not good enough to get me into one of the good schools up North. So I had to settle on Shenda. My brother, who was a pioneer at Shenda and had graduated in one of the first years, told me I better study business. "You ever heard of a rich poet?" he asked.

My Shenda was not the same school my brother had known. He had gone before "the we-are-not-allowed-to-mention event" and by the time I arrived, new leaders were trying to make Shenda into a Party school. Of course, I am a Cantonese and we don't care about politics. Anyhow, some of the best experiences I had were in the first few weeks before classes, when we were in military training. I met good friends, who would become my drinking and smoking buddies for the next four years. Alcohol and cigarettes were some of the new treasures of my study.

I had been brainwashed by my brother, who had heaped praise on his dedicated teachers and the school's leaders. The Shenda I went to was a much different place. The teachers did not know our names, and we did not know their names. We used to take turns skipping class. When teachers called roll, our friends would yell out "present" when our name was called. In a political studies class, the teacher gave us attendance slips on our way out of class. We would go through the line twice, undetected, so we could collect the slips for our absent friends. We could borrow notes from our girlfriends and copy them so we would know what to study for the exams. Usually, a week was enough time to spend cramming for exams. We only failed courses we were allowed to fail and still get a degree. Almost all my friends had two and only two failures, for three meant you could not get a degree.

For most of the semester we went out with our friends, often to the Maqueling intersection, just off campus near the student dormitories. We often went there for a midnight snack and would come back late if we were planning to skip the morning classes. The old men who served as guards for our dorm went to bed early, and they did not mind us getting in late as long as we did not wake them. Sometimes we would climb over the fence,

but often they just left the gate unlocked. We always gave them cigarettes or bai jiu (white lightening). As we became seniors, some of us would spend the night with our girlfriends in the girls' dorm, and we would have to wait until noontime to leave the building so not to arouse the suspicion of the old women who guarded the girls' gate.

When I came to Shenda [1991], like almost all my classmates, I was a virgin. But in my first year, some of the older students in our department took us to Maqueling and teased us about not having had a sexual experience. Often, Maqueling was frequented by prostitutes and many of the women were willing to do virgins free if they thought they could get repeat business. The beds in the back rooms of the Maqueling restaurant are the graveyards of the virginities of many of my classmates.

I was appointed monitor for my class because I had a higher score than the other boys in my department. At first I was proud to be monitor, but then it turned out that the department head wanted to use me to force my classmates to become involved in politics. From an upper classmate I learned that the leader would treat me well if I made sure that my classmates pretended to be Lei Feng, and if I reported to him who the troublemakers were. I was told I should join the Party. None of us liked the department head, who had been appointed by the university president supposedly because he was a dragon [long]. He was one of the worst teachers we ever had. He used a textbook that he had written, and it was one of the worst textbooks we every had. We nicknamed him "Da Chong" [big worm]. I asked to quit the monitoring job and I was told that I could not quit. It was an appointment for my life at Shenda. Anyway, I did quit and this caused me a lot of grief. Da Chong would not accept my resignation, so I just ignored all the assignments. After a tree-planting afternoon in which none of the class showed up and Da Chong lost face with the president, I was replaced with a more obedient student.

Before I graduated, I had found a job with an export company through a friend of my brother. During the probationary period, my performance was highly rated. However, when it came time to sign the contract, I was told that I was not needed. I had my brother's friend check this out and we learned that Da Chong had gone out of his way to tell the company I was irresponsible and should not be hired permanently. My brother's friend had to intercede on my behalf.

After we had our graduation ceremony in which the top leaders—the bosses of Da Chong—praised themselves for all their good deeds, we went out with our department for a banquet. Da Chong and his co-workers were

all toothy smiles, although they knew we did not like them and we knew they did not like us. Other departments took their students to fancy restaurants, but we went to one of the student canteens which had been set up to serve us and students from another department with cheap leaders. Uncharacteristically, they gave us all the beer we could drink, which might have been a mistake. We could drink a lot of beer, having four years of practice. So, as the meal went on, Da Chong realized that this was going to cost him more money than any guanxi with us was worth, so they cut off the flow of beer. We didn't like that. Somehow a bottle broke, perhaps by accident. Well, we just let a lot of beer bottles fall to the floor accidentally. While, we still had something left in our glasses, we gave a final toast. Long live Shenda! To the four treasures of our Shenda study: tang, yan, jiu, and tao. In other words, chocolate, cigarettes, wine and condoms.

5. Pedagogy

As noted earlier, SZU operated what were called the Three Classrooms, referring to classroom instruction, part-time jobs, and extracurricular activities. The most important of these, at least as judged by students' time allocation, was the first classroom. Second-year Foreign Language students in 1992, for example, had signed up for an average 35 hours per week in class (25 hours were mandatory). Juniors were taking 32.5 hours, while first-term seniors usually saw fewer than 20 hours. Students in other departments took even more hours. The published *required* classes for Management majors who entered in 1992 and 1993 are presented in Table 5.1. Students who chose to take electives would acquire additional hours.

Classes met over five weekdays plus Saturday morning, and they spanned two hours (Saturday classes ceased when SZU conformed to the state-mandated five-day work week in 1995). Excluding breaks, instruction involved two 50-minute sessions, but classes in the third morning period were almost always cut short to allow students to rush to the canteens, a practice which was subjected to constant criticism by the Academic Affairs Office during each of SZU's administrations.

Table 5.1: Hours of required classes, *benke* Management majors entering 1992 and 1993¹

	1992	1993
1 st year		
1 st term	32	28
2 nd term	30	29
2 nd year		
1 st term	29	26
2 nd term	23	28
3 rd year		
1 st term	31	33
2 nd term	32	40
4 th year		
1 st term	24	28
2 nd term	8	8

In a sense, students in Chinese higher education are treated like state employees. Their "job" is to study and prepare to become valuable *rencai* in socialist construction. Until the educational reforms of 1993 went into effect, most universities charged little or no tuition, and most graduates were assigned jobs as cadres with state-run companies or in government offices. In the pre-reform uniform system, curriculum and pedagogy were also standardized. Specializations, under Soviet influence, had their curricula set by the SEdC or ministries. Textbooks used to teach

railroad hydraulics in Wuhan, for example, were the same as those used in Guangzhou. Pedagogy, although not standardized by state edict, had become effectively standardized through a historical development largely influenced by cultural factors. Classroom instruction varied, of course, by the nature of the individual teacher and the type of course, but in general, undergraduate education was textbook-based and exam-oriented. In the sciences track, most institutions lacked sufficient laboratory equipment to afford students the opportunity to experiment. They had to be content watching an instructor demonstrate. In cases where funds were so limited that not even the teacher could demonstrate, videos had to substitute. In the arts, the lack of funds also helped to define the nature of instruction. In the earlier days of the People's Republic, only the teacher had a textbook (perhaps one in Russian) from which to teach. Reading from the book, thus, was a logical pedagogy. There was little alternative. By the mid-1980s sufficient textbooks existed so that the lecturer did not have a monopoly over teaching materials.

Problems such as lack of money for textbooks or laboratory equipment/materials never really influenced SZU's teaching, although the latter may have had a negative impact on staff research. From the beginning, SZU's authorities were determined to create a modern university with modern teaching methods. The yearbooks were filled with the term *jiaoxue gaige*, teaching reform. This was a catchall phrase that encompassed curriculum reform, textbook reform, scheduling reform, credit system development as well as issues of pedagogy. This last element—the “toughest nut to crack” in the words of one teacher—remained more or less intact in a shell resistant to all but minor denting.

Despite the fact that students purchased textbooks, many teachers in the arts at SZU continued to run classes in the old fashioned way, lecturing (but now from textbooks that students themselves had bought). To a great extent this was the dominant mode of instruction in Foreign Language and the business departments; it existed but held minority sway among teachers in Chinese and Law. The worse teachers (in the students' opinion) would read right from the text; the better teachers would base their lectures on subjects covered by the text, which they used in a supplementary fashion. The best teachers, again in the view of students with whom I had conversations over my six years at SZU, would largely ignore the text. Some would provide reading lists. The best teachers were those who made learning interesting, in other words, those who kept the students from being bored. It is not surprising that students reported that a sense of humor was one of the most important characteristics of a good teacher.

The university administrations and the department leaders themselves campaigned against the type of lecturing methods referred to as *man tang guan*, literally “whole class inculcation,” and *zhu ru shi*, literally “fill in style.” The Management Department for one included the following statement in its Basic Requirements in Teaching Management:²

Class teaching should stick to the principle of having only ‘little but essential’ content and should employ methods of enlightenment, case study and class discussion which are interesting and vivid.

The reason SZU teaching style remained largely unreformed, therefore, was not due to lack of stated intent.

SZU employed an exam-directed type of learning. Students were assessed by final exam, although homework, participation, and mid-term exams could be factored in to compute the final grade (but never more than 20-30%). Exams were almost always based on assigned texts, and prepping for exams meant understanding, or at least being able to replicate, material from the text. Almost no classes at SZU required original essays from students. Out-of-class work entailed reviewing texts in advance of lectures, but almost never did it require writing essays based on thought and/or research. Essays were required in some courses, but they were aimed at getting students to reproduce materials available in the text. For seniors the graduation thesis or design, as required by the SEDC, offered an opportunity for original work. This was the case in Electronics and Architecture, especially. In other departments it was often a mere exercise of reformatting others’ ideas into a student’s essay. Teachers took on 4-5 thesis advisees and met with them once or twice in a group. Students received little individualized attention, and the thesis defense was perfunctory.

Take-home examinations were not permitted at SZU; few teachers allowed term papers to substitute for examinations. Exams had to be sat for, at a specific time and location. This influenced students’ class behavior. They rarely asked questions in class. When they did raise their hands, the purpose was to get further explanation from the teacher. Most questions that were asked had answers, and a good teacher was one who could provide the correct information. In other words, questions *should be* answerable. Confucius, arguably the greatest teacher in Chinese history, himself encouraged questions in this fashion. This was not the Socratic method, where questions to students served the purpose of developing the students’ reasoning, logic and overall thinking ability. Teachers operating in the tradition of Socrates

might ask students questions that cannot generate definite answers. Socrates would not have fit into the teaching and learning environment of SZU.

Among SZU teachers there was a general awareness that their pedagogy lacked imagination and in many cases failed to keep students' attention. This failing varied in degree by departments, but the problem was most acute in business and Foreign Language. Some teachers were intent to change their teaching style, however. Pei Quanzhong, an associate professor who taught international finance and banking, wrote on pedagogical reform in an article entitled "On the 'Dialog' Style of Teaching" that appeared in the university's internal journal in 1990.³ Pei argued that his pattern of teaching varied from the traditional methods used in China in which students did not participate in class. Instead, Pei prepared students by giving them questions and reference materials. During discussions, he divided students into groups to promote questioning and dialog. Some students raised very difficult questions, and Pei tried his best to give satisfactory answers. Respond to the student immediately, he advised; don't spend time mulling over the question. Be patient with students who are nervous; don't ridicule students or laugh at their mistakes. Pei encouraged students to keep questioning until they got satisfactory explanations. He also permitted students to ask questions unrelated to the particular topic under discussion, and students could comment on each other's courtesy, style and organization of speech. Using these elements, Pei reported he never had cases of students sleeping or day-dreaming in class or creating disturbances. In his article, Pei explained that teachers had to be well-prepared; they must fully understand the material when using this style and must relate instruction to the standard textbook. Letting students participate, he admitted, did not lessen teacher work load but rather made it heavier.

To the Western educator, Pei's remarks might appear a bit basic, something right out of Teaching Methods 101. But in China, not only is this approach rare, but writing about the approach has also been rare. Both the approach and writing about it are becoming more frequent, however. Since the Open Door policy of the late 1970s, Chinese teachers have been exposed to western teaching methods as they have watched visiting overseas experts and expatriates employed as "foreign teachers." Some teaching staff have gone abroad for advanced degrees or as visiting scholars. Those who have returned have carried back to China information on what might be called "the Western approach." The two different approaches to pedagogy, described as "teaching-based model of learning" and "inquiry-based model," are described as thus in a World Bank publication:⁴

The teaching-based model was popular in Europe and in America when education was viewed primarily as a process of transmitting knowledge and facts to a large number of people in a short time. Today, a country such as China, which faces the difficult task of training a large number of people in a short period of time in order to achieve its modernization goals, may still favor the teaching-based model. Although this model remains useful for transmitting factual knowledge, wherever great stress is now placed on understanding, it has been replaced by the inquiry-based model.

It seems fair to generalize that China uses the teaching-based (and teacher-based) model of learning, but the pedagogical picture is far more complex. Western observers have begun to note various positive aspects in the learning process in Confucian-heritage cultures (CHC).⁵ Classrooms in CHCs provide good teaching and learning environments, including:⁶

- an emphasis on student activity, with much cooperative and other group work;
- warm classrooms/other learning climate, interpreting 'warm' as appropriate to the culture;
- high cognitive level outcomes are expected.

At the primary school level, for instance, several teachers are often assigned to a single class, and teachers can give individual students specialized attention. Students spend years mastering the writing of Chinese characters; memorization is a mainstay of the pedagogy, but memorization deepens and develops understanding.⁷ Classes in secondary school are larger; the pedagogy remains uniform. But when CHC learners—at least in the case of research subjects in Hong Kong—move on to tertiary education, they initiate and self-structure a type of collaborative learning that has a positive effect on overall learning.⁸ Nothing in CHC secondary education poses an insurmountable hurdle to keep students from becoming critical and creative thinkers at the university. This was borne out in a study of Singapore-educated students who went to Australia for university. These students, while continuing to maintain the high achievement orientation that characterizes CHC schooling, were able to adapt in order to meet the demands of a new educational environment, which included a de-emphasis on grades. These students became at least as active in tutorials as their native Australian counterparts.⁹ Although the studies just cited do not use PRC students as subjects, their findings in so far as they relate to CHCs in general make at least two important points for Mainland educators. First, they suggest that primary and secondary schools in Chinese societies produce individuals with strong funda-

mentals for future learning. Second, respect for education and a strong teacher-student relationship are admirable features of an education system in which teachers develop close relationships with their students, relationships that often last a lifetime.

When PRC students arrive at university, pedagogy has been firmly ingrained. Mentoring relationships begin anew, especially among students who wish to pursue graduate studies. Shenzhen University was certainly a different case. At SZU, teachers were too busy with side-businesses to provide much mentoring, and few students were interested in graduate study (at least not in China). Classes in the business fields were large (70-100 students); no seminars were offered. The case method, which itself is appropriate for business courses, promotes inquiry-based learning;¹⁰ but cases were rarely used in business courses at SZU. Overall SZU teaching was not closely monitored. The SZU Academic Affairs office was too preoccupied with administrative matters (room arrangements, examination scheduling, record maintenance, and the like) to be able to devote time to such a thorny issue as pedagogy. Reform—or rather announcements suggesting reform—in pedagogy most often came in the form of platitudes, directives or generalizations. Rarely were specifics provided; never were guidelines or rules issued. Rather, educational authorities were content with dismissing the standard pedagogy with a derisive characterization like “duck-filling type” (*tian ya shi*).

Experiments in pedagogy

Pei’s contribution, cited earlier, to the debate was unique among articles by teachers in SZU publications. Among a few of SZU’s expatriate teachers, however, a pedagogy more consistent with that practiced in Western countries existed. The next part of this chapter discusses several innovations in English language teaching that involved both Chinese and western faculty. Several courses will be examined: Oral/Conversational English, Listening, Writing and CECL (Communicative English for Chinese Learners), an innovative course that integrated reading, writing, listening, speaking and translation (the Five Abilities).

Oral English

Native English speakers are employed to teach Conversational English in most Chinese Universities. As a relatively wealthy institution, SZU hired

about a dozen foreign teachers each year, most of whom taught in the Foreign Language Department. Conversation was a required course for English major students during their first two years, and students wanted (“demanded” in the words of a former department head) foreign teachers for these courses. The use of expatriate staff at SZU will be examined in the next chapter; suffice it to say here that these courses varied greatly in quality, as did the expatriate teachers themselves. No ESL credentials were required of expatriate language teachers; there was no guideline as to what the course was supposed to accomplish, what the students were supposed to learn, and no assigned textbooks or uniform class plan. Teachers, most of whom had never before taught in China and many of whom had never taught anywhere, had to “wing it.” After hiring its teachers, the FLD would say only: “Get the students to speak in class, to be more active.” The pedagogy of FLD did not encourage students to speak in classes taught by Chinese staff; conversation was allocated, indeed confined, to the Oral English courses. Despite their often lack of rigor (or perhaps because of it), these courses were generally liked by students, for they served as exposures to western culture. For most Chinese students, these courses were the first personal experiences they had had with people of a different race and culture. In anthropological terminology, the course was an introduction to “the other.”

The first task for most Oral English teachers was to ensure that the students were interested in the course. A field of educational theory called megacognition suggests that students who are interested in a subject learn better than those who are uninterested or even bored. To maintain interest, conversation courses at SZU were often characterized by games, role playing, simulations and other active exercises. Gaming involved the teacher’s presenting a situation and then dividing the students into smaller discussion groups. An example:¹¹

Tomorrow one million eggs will be delivered to the class. Your group will be receiving the eggs. What will you do with them?

Students would work out the problem in groups of four or five people. Sometimes students chose their own groups; more often, teachers distributed certain students—the best and the weakest—in ways so to maximize participation.

Another technique involved role-playing through skits. Students were given a brief handout and assigned a play to perform in the next scheduled class. They could rehearse the play by themselves at home but were not

permitted to memorize parts. Each student had to be prepared to play all roles. An example of an assigned skit:¹²

Mary and Lynn are best friends. But Mary has a secret. She has just broken Lynn's favorite vase from the Ming Dynasty. Lynn finds it missing and accuses her husband (played by the teacher), but eventually Mary confesses.

Such a technique required the teacher's active participation, something with which most Chinese teachers in the FLD felt uncomfortable.

Keeping students interested was a necessary but not sufficient part of the conversation teacher's job. Several teachers attempted to make the course more challenging than the "free talk" that characterized many classes managed by foreign teachers. In these teachers' opinions, quantity of conversation—the directive given teachers by the FLD—was no substitute for quality. Students at SZU, perhaps influenced by the Hong Kong media, spoke a type of English, commonly known in China as "Chinglish," that might be characterized as grammatically sloppy. China, of course, has its own English dialect, just as Alabama, Australia or Germany, for example. Chinglish is a sub-standard dialect of standard Chinese English. In Chinglish, inattention is paid to subject-verb agreement, pluralization, tense and pronoun gender. Although native English speakers tend sometimes to flaw their grammar, they rarely utter the type of mistakes that Chinese learners are prone to make. Chinese is a language that functions within rules that do not pay excessive attention to subject-verb agreement, pluralization, tense and pronoun gender—all items built into Romance and Germanic tongues. Thus, native speakers of English cringe when they hear the likes of: "Many girl goes home yesterday to sell his newspaper." Such an exaggerated example serves to illustrate common mistakes. Normal speech patterns of students entering SZU were not so bad as this example, of course, but they still included about one mistake per two sentences. To correct this, teachers would tape-record students' classroom conversations. Students were taped in unrehearsed conversations and then given the tape to take back to their dorm and transcribe. The typed transcription was to include exactly what the students had said, mistakes and all. They then corrected their mistakes in grammar and syntax, noting the type of mistake. Through this process, students began to realize that they constantly dropped the letter *s* from verbs as well as plural nouns. Finally, the teacher reviewed the transcripts, comparing them with the tapes, and made additional corrections when appropriate. In this way, individual students were able to spot their problems. Corrections and comments were

made privately so the students would not be embarrassed in front of their classmates.

Using a tape-recorder in class in this way did not fit into the standard pedagogy of the FLD, and several Chinese teachers who were advised of the technique never employed it. Tape-recorders, they said, were to be used only for listening classes, not for conversation. One teacher who had earned a Ph.D. overseas agreed that students needed to speak more proper English, but the thought of having to listen to students' recordings and correct transcriptions was too time-consuming a task to be appealing. SZU teachers, in general, were reluctant to deviate from standard pedagogy in even the most minor way.

Composition

According to FLD promotional materials, writing was one of the Five Abilities that SZU English majors acquired. Writing, however, was a particular ability that Chinese teachers refused to teach. No fixed-staff (i.e., PRC teacher) was ever assigned to teach writing over the history of the department. Perhaps a half-dozen of the Chinese teachers in the FLD had sufficient English writing skills to teach the subject, but none was willing to commit to reading student essays. For the purpose of computing work load, writing courses were given 1.4 times the weight of normal courses without homework. Nonetheless, Chinese faculty members saw this compensation as inadequate for the drudgery associated with reading student essays. One teacher, who had studied abroad, explained:

Our students can memorize, not analyze. They copy from others. Why should I read their essays when, if I really want to, I can go to the original source. Anyway, it is too much work. I have my own interests to think about.

Generally, teachers of foreign language at SZU were required to do little preparation for class. With rare exceptions, they spent no more than one hour per week preparing for *all* their courses. In addition, none of these teachers had written much in English since they had completed their graduate theses. Few teachers in the department published their research in English. For these reasons, there was no writing course required in the English major curriculum until the department was six years old. Before then writing had been taught only once, resulting in a disaster. The first composition teacher in the department chose teaching materials that resembled an American elementary school exercise book suitable for pre-teens. Students wrote their composi-

tions on lined sheets in the exercise books, which they were to hand in to the teacher who would return them corrected. The SZU students considered this a condescending pedagogy not befitting young adults like themselves; their rebellion forced the teacher to abandon the procedure. Being a native speaker, of course, does not necessarily mean that one can write well, not to mention teach writing. In fact, unskilled foreign teachers tended to make very bad writing teachers.

In the early 1990s, several foreign teachers designed a writing sequence, which the FLD adopted. For subsequent years, the task of teaching writing fell to these and other foreign teachers. The sequence covered the first three years of English major study. (Students also took writing in their senior year, but the course was taught by the same foreign teacher who had used the pre-teens exercise book. That course, which was mostly devoted to writing business letters and resumes, was not taken seriously by senior students. When they were assigned essays to write, they merely recycled assignments from their previous, more rigorous courses or copied them from the encyclopedia.) The writing sequence developed by the two foreign teachers followed the general pattern used in American primary and secondary schools. Students started from the basics. They reviewed parts of speech and learned to diagram sentences. They practiced writing sentences and reviewing grammar, using American textbooks that were widely available in China.¹³ Homework was assigned from exercise books on practical grammar usage, in which students learned to spot and correct mistakes.¹⁴ A typical homework assignment might include 100 sentences to be corrected, for example, on misplaced modifiers or punctuation for independent clauses. Students then moved on to paragraphs and essays.

A variety of strategies used by writing teachers are widely known to ESL teachers in China. They include delayed copying, guided sentence-making, sentence transformations, sentence building, dictation-composition, cloze-test writing, linking words and phrases into a new passage, class composition on the chalkboard, strip-essay writing, pair group writing, composition through adaptation, composition through translation, précis and composition through pictures.¹⁵ Experience has shown that successful teachers tend to be those who can design topics which students find interesting. Assignments like "My narrow escape," letters of complaint to real or imagined authorities, or writing from other people's points of view proved successful at SZU.¹⁶ Students were required to word-process their assignments, using spell-checkers, grammar-checkers and a Thesaurus.¹⁷ The Computer Center allocated class time for writing courses.

Grammar was a major part of writing class. FLD taught grammar to freshmen, but the course was theoretical in nature and did not involve student exercises, primarily because the teachers did not want to assign homework, fearing that they would have to correct it. The FLD students, therefore, lacked a practical grasp of grammar. Thus, grammar was made a part of writing classes, to the objections of the FLD leaders, who kept reminding the foreign teacher that expatriates were hired to teach writing, not grammar, which was a separate course. "We Chinese can teach grammar ourselves," one leader commented.

To correct another major deficiency among ESL students, the writing sequence included homework on idioms and phrasal verbs. The FLD employed students to word-process several exercise books, which were mimeographed and sold to students, much to the dismay of the school's printing office which did not relish such gargantuan jobs.¹⁸ Correcting students' mistakes has received much attention in the literature on how to teach writing. One FLD teacher used the Josephson method, which requires students to number each word of their essays.¹⁹ The teacher marks (but does not correct) mistakes. A special form classifies sixty types of common mistakes (no topic sentence, improper article, wrong preposition, etc.). On that form, the teacher notes the numbers of the words that contain mistakes with the corresponding type of mistake. For example, if word # 25 is misspelled, the teacher jots #25 in the space for misspelled words. Using this method, the average 300-word essay took about 10 minutes to mark. Students then corrected their mistakes and returned the essay for a final mark (The teacher did not "grade" the essay until the student had made corrections, which served as an incentive for students to figure out their mistakes).

Having mastered writing fundamentals, students advanced to the upper level writing course which was offered in the third year. This course taught the students the fundamentals of research writing. First, students undertook directed research in which a topic was assigned and several newspaper articles were provided. Students were required to integrate the ideas from the articles into their own essays.²⁰ For the remainder of the course, students turned in monthly 1,000-word term papers on topics of their own choosing. Initially, access to research materials proved an impediment to students' research. Although not primarily a research library, the SZU library still contained many useful sources (*New York Times*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Washington Post*, *China Daily*, *Readers' Digest*, to cite a few). In the days before CD-Rom and WWW, the SZU library lacked even a single periodical guide to English-language publications. The job of finding articles relevant to stu-

dent's chosen topics fell upon the teacher, who himself indexed relevant articles from the library's collection. The FLD had been given thousands of books and journals, many of which were donated by Hong Kong scholars. These were also indexed. Over several years FLD amassed its own research library that included a set of *National Geographic*, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, and *Asia Week*. Over time a computerized index (which students could themselves search in the Computer Center) contained over 1,500 citations to available articles. Fortunately, students invariably chose a narrow range of sociological topics to write on. The teacher on average was able to guide each student to three or four magazine articles, to chapters from textbooks or anthologies, or to journal papers relevant to his or her term paper topic.

In a sense, the writing sequence was only as good as its teachers. Few foreign teachers were qualified to teach the courses, but in the view of FLD leaders any foreigner was deemed capable of teaching writing. In one case, a Taiwan-born Chinese-American was assigned to teach the first year writing course. He lacked confidence, rightly so, in his own writing ability. He chose to ignore the teaching plan described above, instead lecturing on writing, Chinese history, and his life as an overseas Chinese. For an entire term he gave his students not a single writing assignment. His students, scared by their upperclassmen into believing that a replacement teacher would "enslave" them to homework, did not complain. Not coincidentally, these students produced the worse performance on the unified test for English majors in FLD history (Their performance on the writing component brought down their scores). In part because of their poor showing, the writing sequence was altogether abandoned the following year. From then on, teachers were instructed to run classes in which the students sat at their desks writing on assigned topics. Even though students were bored, the classes were orderly; the leaders of the FLD were pleased.

Listening and culture courses

Pedagogical innovations occurred in other courses taught by expatriate teachers. The Listening class had traditionally included a set of lessons based on tapes marketed under the name *Step By Step*. Listening was a course that many FLD teachers liked to teach, for it usually entailed just operating a language laboratory. The course involved virtually no teaching. English language majors performed well on the listening component of standardized exams, and the leaders of FLD believed that *Step By Step* was ade-

quate, given the students' supplemental exposure to Hong Kong English language media. One foreign teacher disagreed. She had been issued extremely scratchy tapes, filled with background static, that were difficult for even a native speaker to understand. Produced by SZU's Audio/visual (A/V) Center, they were copies of copies of copies...Referring to the course as "sleep by sleep," she instead developed a complete 18-week course that catered to individual student's needs. Having collected interesting tapes and books-on-tape from Hong Kong, at her own expense, she was able to provide students with tapes that reflected their listening abilities. This course received the most enthusiastic student endorsement of any course ever taught in the department and earned the teacher a ¥1,000 bonus for excellent teaching performance by a foreign teacher, one of only two such awards that had been given to expatriate teachers in SZU's first 12 years. When this teacher left the FLD, she handed over the class plan and her collection of tapes to two Chinese fixed staff who were assigned to teach listening the following year. Neither of these teachers incorporated any of her course into their teaching; one admitted that such a course would be too time-consuming to teach. Instead, the teachers continued to use *Step by Step* whose very scratchiness and static were praised because they "forced students to listen more carefully."

Several foreign teachers constructed courses on American society and culture that reflected an anthropological perspective. These courses were lecture in format but the teachers attempted to maximize participation. One teacher broke down the class into smaller discussion groups and seminars. Using a variation on the Socratic method, another teacher called on students, referring to wallet-sized photos each had provided. Another teacher supplemented teaching materials with clippings from news periodicals, constructing his own reading lists. The pedagogies used in these courses are not much different from what many Western secondary and tertiary teachers might employ, yet they were unique for SZU, where teachers employed few innovations that departed from the standard one-way lecture.

Communicative English for Chinese learners (CECL)

In 1990 the FLD adopted an innovative core curriculum for students in the first two years of the English major. The program was called CECL, standing for Communicative English for Chinese Learners. Prepared by a team headed by Professor Li Xiaojun of the Guangzhou Foreign Languages Institute, CECL had been developed with the help of funding and personnel from the British Council. Most English major curricula in China consist of five

separate components: extensive reading, intensive reading, listening, conversation, and writing, along with supplemental courses in grammar, linguistics, literature and translation. CECL combined the major components into an integrated arrangement.

CECL had been trialed at the Guangzhou Institute for several years and by 1990 was available in a set of 12 books, which included two volumes for each of the four semesters, plus four accompanying teacher handbooks.²¹ Each book was divided into teaching units that covered two weeks each. CECL employed a student-centered approach, and the teacher's manual included an extensive introduction to acquaint the teacher to theories and methods of teaching that did not characterize standard language teaching pedagogy in China. First, CECL used the communicative approach, as opposed to the grammar-translation method or rote learning usually employed in ESL courses in China.²² The various lessons included modern-day topics that students would find interesting. Reading materials were taken from recent publications, both Chinese and foreign. Second, CECL abandoned the teacher-centered approach, instead making the student the center of the class. Furniture had to be rearranged so students could directly face one another. The teacher was no longer at the center of class, literally or figuratively. Several times during a single lesson, students paired off to do exercises that a perambulating teacher monitored. For class exercises, the instructor's manual offered the teacher a variety of suggestions on how to conduct class, employing techniques similar to those discussed in the above section on oral English. Teachers were encouraged to prod students to ask questions and take over discussions. Third, the books contained homework, which included oral drills as well as written assignments. About one-third of student's time was to be devoted to out-of-class work. Fourth, the components were integrated and were not divided into discrete class-long periods, according to a fixed schedule. Listening, for example, might occur before speed reading drills but after oral exercises one week, but vice versa the next. The components flowed together; scheduling varied according to the needs of each unit. Effective CECL teaching, as experienced in Guangzhou, became team teaching. Teachers met several times a month to discuss the course and modifications were always in progress.

On the advice of a SZU foreign teacher, the head of FLD agreed to use CECL. Not himself trained as an ESL teacher, the department head accepted this new strategy without a full awareness of what it involved. After spending only a few minutes examining the textbooks, he accepted its usefulness primarily because the course had been developed by the prestigious

Guangzhou Institute, Guangdong's key language institute—FLD's main rival in terms of recruiting students. Several of the best teachers in the department were approached by the department head to teach the course; each refused, realizing the amount of work that would be involved. Finally, two relatively new teachers were assigned to teach the course. Neither, of course, had taught CECL before, but both were serious teachers with high levels of proficiency in English. They examined the books in the summer prior to the course's initiation.

As a course name, CECL did not appear on the freshmen's class schedules. Rather, students had the same schedules as previous classes: 6 hours of grammar-translation, known as intensive reading; 2 hours extensive (speed) reading; 2 hours listening; 2 hours writing; 4 hours of conversation with a foreign teacher; 3 hours video; plus a pronunciation course for the first term and a grammar course for the second term. CECL, taught by a single teacher for each of two freshman sections of 20 students, was scheduled into the six hours of intensive reading and two hours of listening. The listening class was assigned to one of A/V's language laboratories every Tuesday, despite the fact that the CECL lesson plan did not arrange a specific day for listening. Students were still required to take the extensive reading, writing and conversation courses although CECL also covered these areas. (Some of the teachers involved in these courses attempted to coordinate their activities with the CECL assignments). Freshmen's military training had cut the first semester short by one month. In order to finish the first semesters' books on time, each unit of CECL had to be compressed and completed in 1½ instead of two weeks. CECL assigned tests at the end of each unit and exams at the end of each book. SZU, however, assigned mid-term exams and final exams at specific weeks, for which CECL was forced to conform.

If these structural problems were an annoyance, CECL pedagogy proved a more difficult hurdle for teachers, with the major problem being the transition from teacher-oriented to student-oriented learning. The teachers had had no training for teaching CECL; for the first several weeks they felt uncomfortable and frustrated with the new method and realized that they were having problems. In the third week of classes, the two dispirited teachers went to the Guangzhou Institute (two hours away by train) where they visited classes, watched CECL teaching and talked with CECL teachers. They came away enlightened and refreshed. They returned to SZU with a confidence that was quickly reflected in their teaching.

Table 5.2: CECL results, first semester 1990-1991

	average	std. dev
CECL exam	75.4	7.8
reading	79.1	7.1
oral	75.4	7.8
listening	70.1	10.8

On the standardized exam given at the end of for the first semester, students performed well, about five percentage points below the students in Guangzhou. This probably reflected only the fact that the institute recruited students who scored 5% above SZU students on the English component of the college entrance exam. In other words, SZU CECL students were keeping pace with their Guangzhou counterparts. Listening was the FLD student's major weakness, so *Step by Step* (with non scratchy tapes) was introduced in the next term. Students were relatively content with CECL. Some grumbled about the amount of homework; others were still reluctant to speak in class, but all in all they were satisfied (see Table 5.2).

In the fall of 1991, CECL was expanded to include the next set of texts for the students who had moved on to the second year. A new freshman class started with the first course. One of the initial CECL teachers remained with the course and was joined by an enthusiastic, Hong Kong educated, experienced teacher. They taught the course much as it had been taught the previous year. The second year was taught by two of the FLD's most senior faculty members. One was a dedicated teacher who liked the CECL innovations; he taught his section in a serious manner. The other teacher, who at the same time was put in charge of the entire CECL curriculum, announced to the students at the beginning of the semester that he was teaching CECL only because he had been assigned to do so. He said he disagreed with the communicative approach and intended to integrate the CECL materials into an intensive reading framework. Furthermore, he said that he disagreed with teachers monitoring one another's classes ("No one will tell me how to teach"), so the bi-weekly CECL teachers conferences that had existed the prior year were abandoned. Still, teachers gave each other support through informal mechanisms. Despite the director's distaste for the course, CECL operated for that year largely unchanged; students remained satisfied.

The next year, however, the teacher who wanted to transform CECL into intensive reading was appointed deputy head of the department in charge of all English major teaching. He proclaimed this would be the last time the course would be offered at SZU. This teacher further amended the second year course to bring it more in line with standard intensive reading courses.

The FLD assigned a new teacher to teach the first year course. The newcomer was a Ph.D. holder from a key Chinese university. His field was literature, not ESL; he had had no experience teaching, and for various reasons (including sexual advances he made to students) he received little respect from the class. He taught the freshmen CECL students for 12 hours a week, attempting to use the course materials but not being able to understand, let alone master, the CECL method. A British Council CECL consultant who came to monitor CECL's progress in the FLD attended this teacher's class and characterized his teaching as a "disaster." When the department head was informed of this assessment, he said that new teachers should be given certain slack; the semester had already begun, replacing the teacher, however incompetent, would cause him to lose face. (In fact the newcomer had been hired by the department head through *guanxi*, so his replacement would cause the department head, himself, to lose face). The freshmen students endured CECL under the newcomer for the entire year. They were the very students who had the non-writing instructor from Taiwan, and as a conversation teacher the non-innovative foreign teacher who had once used the pre-teen writing workbook. (Her conversation course used similarly juvenile materials.) Thus, no solid English language foundation ever developed in that year's class; not a single member of the class passed China's uniform exam for English language majors that was taken in their junior year. The class was, in fact, the weakest in FLD history, despite the fact that their entry test scores had been relatively high. Their curriculum and its pedagogy were unchallenging; from almost the start they disengaged from learning English. In fact, these students were so disgusted with the FLD program that several of them went back to their secondary schools specifically to advise seniors not to choose FLD. The entry level exam scores for the following year dropped below those of the Chinese Department, for the first time in SZU's history.

To sum up, CECL was both a success and failure in the FLD. At times, especially in the first year, the program worked well. Three key elements were present in its teachers: enthusiasm, dedication and competence, leading to full engagement of those teachers into their teaching. But some or all of these elements were lacking in the course's subsequent development; had they been present, perhaps the course would not have been judged a failure, as measured by poor student test scores, and teachers' and students' disengagement.

Cooperative learning

A type of learning present in North American education from kindergarten to graduate school is called cooperative learning. Basically, students take on classroom or homework assignments in small groups. Cooperative learning allows for discussion, an exchange of views and the management of intellectually conflicting ideas.²³ Its advocates contend that the pedagogy “promotes a greater use of higher-level reasoning strategies and critical thinking than do competitive or individualistic learning strategies.”²⁴ Chinese society generally values harmony over conflict and this extends to the classroom (where unfortunately harmony also contributes to student passivity). Nevertheless, cooperative learning rarely exists at any level of education in China. CECL attempted to incorporate group work in classes, but the SZU teachers generally dispensed with homework assignments that used this method. There was too much resistance from students, and the instructors themselves were not familiar with the teaching techniques that accompany students’ group work.

Cooperative learning was employed by an expatriate teacher in a research writing class. Sixteen students were each given a different book about Chinese who lived abroad. The teacher had acquired single copies of novels and personal accounts such as Maxine Hong Kingston’s *Woman Warrior* and *China Men* and Amy Tan’s *Joy Luck Club* and *Kitchen God’s Wife*.²⁵ Before reading the novels, students selected a term paper topic of their individual choosing (e.g., leaving a spouse behind, remittances to the motherland, growing up bicultural/schizophrenic, discrimination on two continents, etc.). In their term papers students were required to cite illustrations from as many of the books as possible. Rather than read each book, they were encouraged to share information. Their first drafts generally relied on only their own book and perhaps the one given to a close friend or roommate. Cooperative learning did not kick in until students were forced to revise their papers and resubmit a draft that used more sources. Some students required three or four drafts before completing the assignment to the teacher’s satisfaction. In the end a great amount of sharing had occurred, and this experience in cooperative learning seemed successful.

Cooperative learning is an example of yet another teaching technique that troubled SZU teachers as well as students. Its difficulty as a teaching strategy per se was only one reason why it was avoided. Various cultural, political and structural features of higher education, all discussed below, were also involved. In terms of pedagogy in China, competition is generally more highly valued than cooperation. In her study of secondary schooling

during the Cultural Revolution, for example, Susan Shirk found less cooperation in academic study than in labor or extracurricular activities.²⁶

Study was organized individually, with no collective goal; the stakes also were higher—university selection was in large part based on academic records. Furthermore, the structure of educational selection and job assignment placed classmates in direct, face-to-face competition with one another.

Just as at SZU, more emphasis was placed on competition, as achieved through individual, not group, activity.

Creativity

If pedagogy in Chinese education is considered a hard nut to crack, then creativity is a virtual rock. To start with, creativity is a subject of Western, not Chinese study; it generates little substantive research in the PRC. Even in the West, it is an amorphous concept. It has no commonly accepted definition, and there are no easy ways to measure it. Theories from a sub-field that educators call Philosophy of Education have come up with little careful analysis. Any mere pondering on creativity itself might tend to be considered creative, in the absence of an understanding of creativity among so-called theorists in the field. In the case of China, there exists little writing, either theoretical or empirical, about creativity in Chinese education, and there seems to be nothing that would resemble a “Chinese approach to creativity.” That is not to say, of course, that creativity does not exist in China, either in modern day society or in its traditional culture. Indeed, feudal China saw inventions such as paper (including toilet paper), moveable type, the compass and gunpowder long before they appeared on the European continent. Some claim that Chinese society changed from being innovative to being non-innovative and that the change occurred when Confucian philosophy became dogma.²⁷

Neither my purpose here nor my expertise allows me to develop a fully flushed-out theory of Chinese creativity. Yet, it seems important to recognize that creativity may mean something different in a culture that so greatly differs from that of the Western world. As a consequence, creativity in the context of Chinese higher education may be different from what exists in universities in other societies. This section explores some of the issues surrounding creativity at SZU, but first Western research on the concept is briefly examined. Then the importance of the individual versus that of the collective is explored. Finally, building on the previous section, I will sug-

gest the structural changes that might enhance critical and creative thinking in learning at SZU.

Western research approaches to creativity

Critical and creative thinking are subjective concepts. As with the terms *intellectual* or *pornography* or *culture*, definitions for creativity vary to such an extent that the art of definition largely rests with the individual user. It becomes almost a matter of taste. In a sense, the definition of creativity also depends on the approach taken—the discipline in which one is ensconced. Westerners who study creativity usually come from one of three fields, and the literature any given group cites generally does not overlap with the references from the other groups. Researchers from all three groups have much to say about how one generates creativity or teaches creative thinking.

If the word *thinking* is used with reference to creativity, it is likely that the user is grounded in philosophy. Throughout the history of Western civilization, philosophers have commented about creativity.²⁸ More recently, Matthew Lipman has produced a body of work that deals with teaching philosophy to children.²⁹ He links creative with critical thinking and shows how they support each other in order to produce higher-order thinking. He makes the point that creative thinking is governed by the context of the inquiry taking place. Furthermore, he attaches an importance to the environment and points out that many of the obstacles to introducing thinking in school curriculum are conceptual in nature.³⁰ Favorable conditions, such as competent teaching, adequate curriculum and the formation of a community of inquiry are needed.³¹

Another group that researches creativity includes psychologists (mostly cognitive psychologists and their number-crunching relatives, the psychometricians) who tend to discuss creativity in terms of intelligence and giftedness.³² The pioneering work in this area comes from J. P. Guilford,³³ who separates creativity from intelligence, the latter which represents convergent thinking, i.e., providing the correct solution according to intelligent reasoning. Guilford's view is that creativity includes divergent thinking, which occurs when one can develop different solutions to a particular problem. Another major contribution comes from E. P. Torrance who developed tests to measure creativity.³⁴ Educational psychologists have begun to view creativity as including various components—both divergent and convergent thought as well as total immersion in a particular field, high intrinsic motivation and cultural and social acceptability.³⁵

The third group of researchers are developmental psychologists, as exemplified by Howard Gardner.³⁶ A prolific author who is best known for his theory of multiple intelligences,³⁷ Gardner shares with philosophers the view that creativity is context-oriented. He disputes the validity of creativity tests, however, and in his own research substitutes a historiometric approach for the psychometric tradition.³⁸ While philosophers relate creativity to the *process* of thinking, Gardner ties the concept more to output.³⁹ In his study of seven recognized creative geniuses, he identifies two shared traits: affective/cognitive support and total sacrifice in pursuit of their work mission.

Although no universally accepted definition of creativity emerges from the literature, Gardner's offering will suffice for the purposes of this volume.⁴⁰

The creative individual is a person who regularly solves problems, fashions products, or defines new questions in a domain in a way that is initially considered novel but that ultimately becomes accepted in a particular cultural setting.

Creativity and Chinese education

To note that creativity does not generate substantial research in China is not to say that creativity is ignored by Chinese educationalists and observers. In philosophical ponderings, intellectuals often applaud independent thinking:⁴¹

Teaching must concentrate on training the students' ability to practice and work independently and on cultivating their creativeness. Teachers should help the students strengthen their basic knowledge, extend their scope of specialized knowledge, and should constantly improve their teaching methods.

Individualized teaching is also praised.⁴² Pedagogy should produce in the student "a capacity for self-directed studies, adeptness in problem-solving, organizational and managerial skills and innovativeness (or a budding creative ability)."⁴³ At the same time, Chinese observers note that exam-directed schooling characterizes Chinese education and prevents creativity.⁴⁴ Western-educated observers agree:

The content of the examination became the content of schooling. What was intended to be a means to an end became an end in itself. This perverted form of education produced generations of scholars and intellectuals who possessed a very limited range of knowledge, shared a narrow worldview, squabbled over words, and were too concerned with antiquity to think creatively or act independently.⁴⁵

The strong emphasis on testing and student evaluation has furthermore led to a very exam oriented type of teaching also in secondary education focusing on easily testable knowledge at the expense of problem-solving, creativity and practical skills.⁴⁶

Contemporary Chinese educators are also concerned about the lack of creativity among students, something which is perceived to adversely affect the country's modernization and development. Some advocate radical reform:⁴⁷

The predominant goal of teaching and learning must be changed from transmitting knowledge to training ability so that one can adjust to the rapid development of science and technology and can accept, digest and apply newly emerging ideas. This goal requires that teachers consciously set aside old habits and use an elicitation method in classroom teaching. One half of the class period should be used for instruction and the other half for discussion. Only in this way can the quality of teaching and learning be improved...To obtain such objectives, the old and 'closed' educational system must be changed to an 'open' educational system, that is, a creative education which mainly develops students' intelligence and creativeness. Its characteristics are four: (a) to change from mono-teaching to a combination of teaching, research and production so as to make the teaching system multiple; (b) to change a 'closed' type of class to an open one so as to bring the 'second channel' (activities outside the classroom) into the teaching system; (c) to change from an approach dominated by teachers to one in which student learning predominates and the teaching role is a guiding one; (d) to change from passing on knowledge to developing intelligence so as to seek integration of knowledge and intelligence.

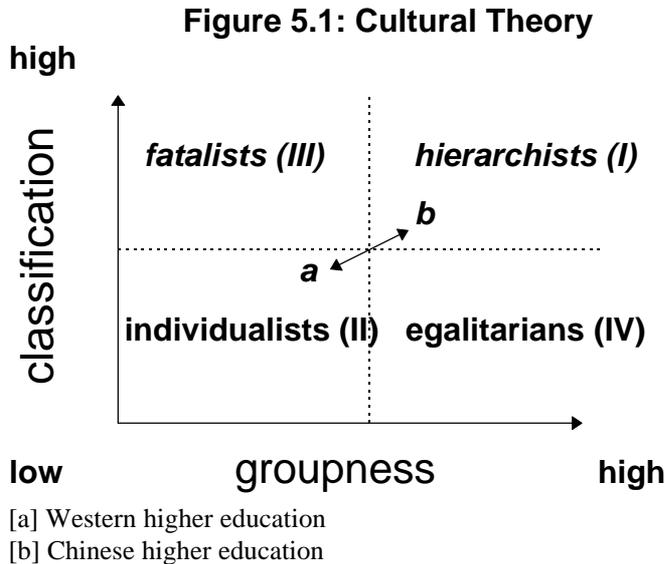
Generally, many feel that education should at least require students to grasp basic knowledge and to possess capable work skills, creativity and the necessary ability for conducting public activities.⁴⁸ Indeed, one of the arguments in the 1980s in support of the abolition of job assignments was that the centrally managed system failed to treat people as individuals and the very concept of job allocation prevented graduates from using their talents and impeded their creativity and spirit.⁴⁹ As part of a general overhaul of human resources planning, general education has been advocated.⁵⁰ As graduates experience competition in a more open job market, work-units recruit on the basis of more than just high marks; graduates must show interpersonal skills, organizational ability, creativity, an ability to express themselves well, adaptability to the social environment and the ability to make independent judgments.⁵¹ But in the view of many Chinese educators, graduates lack in-

dependence and decision-making abilities. They are seen as passive, their creativity is restrained, and their potential cannot be developed.⁵²

Given educator's concerns with how to foster creativity in higher education, why did SZU's pedagogy remain as it did? Part of the answer lies in how the individual fares in Chinese culture and in education in particular. CECL and the courses developed by expatriate teachers, as discussed above, tried to maximize the importance of the individual. Indeed, English language students in China, according to one study, prefer individual class work.⁵³ Foreign teachers see the need, especially in China, for teachers to learn how "to free the strengths and creative energies of the individual, how to frame a social environment wherein the individual is free to experiment, to err, to try again, and to fail again—without losing face, no less being expelled from school or jailed or worse."⁵⁴

The individual in Chinese culture

Cultures differ along various continua. An inter-disciplinary theory, called not surprisingly Cultural Theory, has developed over the last several decades to suggest that two phenomena in particular define cultures.⁵⁵ One is called *groupness* and concerns individuals and their participation in the collective. Societies, for example, which are thought of as hierarchical score high in groupness. In contrast, societies whose members are characterized as individualistic tend to rate low in groupness. The other important phenomenon for defining a culture is the degree of *classification* that exists within a given culture. Hierarchies have high levels of classification whereas a society that is fully egalitarian would be low in terms of classification. Thus, these two phenomenological factors combine to create four groupings: (I) high classification, high groupness; (II) low classification, low groupness; (III) high classification, low groupness; and (IV) low classification, high groupness. This first grouping comprises individuals within a hierarchy. Their society is highly classified and within each class exists high collectively. Confucian societies are generally thought of as highly hierarchical. The second category, in contrast, represents societies that are individualistic. Both attributes—hierarchy and groupness—are low. People (and by extension cultures) who fit into category III are fatalists. This would be the case in caste-based societies where individuals are born into a classification and remain there throughout their lives. Their individuality is of no consequence. Category



IV includes egalitarians. Everyone is equal; the collective rather than the individual is important. These groupings are represented in Figure 5.1.

Higher education, insofar as it reflects the values of the larger society, is placed in Figure 5.1's quadrant (I) for China and quadrant (II) for Western systems. Chinese society is often stereotyped as collectivist and anti-individualistic. David Y.F. Ho, a leading cross-cultural psychologist and an expert on the Chinese patterns of socialization, reports that:⁵⁶

Traditionally, great emphasis was placed on obedience, proper conduct, moral training, and the acceptance of social obligations, in contrast to the lack of emphasis placed on independence, assertiveness, and creativity.

Ho has noted in other research that the degree of Chinese collectivism varies over its five major components: achievement, values, autonomy/conformity, responsibility and self reliance/interdependence. Achievement, the component most associated with education, is the only one of these that merits characterizing Chinese culture as predominantly collectivist as well as anti-individualist.⁵⁷ Educational programs in Mainland China, according to Ho, place a stronger emphasis on achievement motivation than elsewhere, including Taiwan.⁵⁸

Efforts are directed towards training children to become active, self-reliant, competent, intellectually critical, and achievement oriented...Co-operative ef-

forts by members of a group toward achieving collective goals are emphasized more than individual competitiveness.

Certainly, collectivism can be seen in the hallways of SZU, where students in a certain class (year and major) take their courses together in a single group. They move in herd-like fashion from period to period, classroom to classroom. (One Australian observer equated these migrations with sheep who graze from paddock to paddock.) The issue of collectivism in education, however, deserves to be explored beyond this agricultural metaphor. Chinese education combines both collectivism and individualism, just as do the world's other educational systems. Chinese education is individualized in the sense of having competition for university entrance, but it is non-individualized in the sense that instruction is virtually the same for all students of a major. Yet, at SZU instruction did not generally incorporate cooperative learning or research paper writing; pedagogy was quite collective. It has been noted that elsewhere in China, university students prefer to present group work (which of course includes individual contributions) as a group so that individuals are not put on the spot. This may have been the case at SZU. In any case, the examples of innovations presented above which emphasized the individual over the collective were unusual at SZU.

Education in China is not directed towards creativity. It is focused on giving students knowledge, not teaching them to think. Furthermore, subjects that lend themselves to individual interpretation and expressions (literature, history, arts, etc.) have been tightly controlled and politicized by the state since at least 1949, and perhaps for centuries. In China, one first acquires knowledge and skills, and only after that should one attempt to be creative. Thus, according to psychologist Howard Gardner, the dominant educational assumption in China is that basic skills are fundamental and must precede any efforts to encourage creativity.⁵⁹ The western approach, in contrast, is quite the opposite. There is nothing wrong with children's composing their own music or art pieces; experimentation is encouraged. The focus is on the individual, which is why Western (higher) education is placed in quadrant (II) of Figure 5.1. But in China skills are learned collectively. One learns to write characters properly—aligned perfectly on sheets of paper filled with boxed squares to serve as guide—before one develops an individualistic calligraphy style. In other words, skills first, creativity later. Gardner points out that each approach has advantages:⁶⁰

The advantage of the Chinese way is that more of your students become proficient and make it to the goal line. The disadvantage is that they may have

less to say or to show once they get there. The disadvantage of the American way is that many students never make it to the end or even get close. The advantage is that some who do go ‘all the way’ have very interesting and original things to say when they get there.

The Chinese education system, characterized by its steep pyramid, grooms those pupils with high test scores—a select few—to reach the goal line and go to college. It can scarcely afford dropouts among this élite, something that would indicate an inefficient use of scarce resources. Teaching for creativity might get in the way of learning skills and confound the system of advancement based on examination scores. In so emphasizing knowledge-based learning, Chinese education at all levels downplays creativity. Heidi Ross observed this phenomenon in classrooms in a Shanghai foreign language secondary school. There teachers were risk-averse, fearing that critical and creative thinking would bring with them “a price tag of unpredictable results, making both educators and pupils vulnerable to criticism of negligent divergence from officially sanctioned pedagogy.”⁶¹ At that school, however, teachers were still concerned with teaching for creativity. There, “[t]he central pedagogical dilemma facing teachers was how to transform this pattern of rewarding predictable classroom discourse into the ‘independence,’ ‘critical thinking,’ and ‘creativity’ they desired in older students.”⁶² SZU teachers lamented lack of creativity among their students, but they did not modify their own pedagogy to remedy the situation. Teachers who had emotionally disengaged from classroom teaching showed little concern over this issue.

In some cases, teachers actually thwarted students’ creativity. One senior wrote his graduation thesis comparing J.D. Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye* with the works of contemporary Beijing novelist Wang Shuo. Wang, one of the most popular authors in China today, writes about youth alienation and, according to the student, can be regarded as China’s Salinger. The first draft of the student’s thesis was one of the most original essays I had seen from a SZU student, but the thesis advisor rejected the comparison, telling the student to write a “more basic” essay, just describing *Catcher in the Rye*. Too busy with his own projects, the advisor could not be bothered even to talk with the student; he was not interested in intellectual dialogue with any student. Although this example might illustrate an extreme case of irresponsibility, indifference generally characterized SZU’s teachers. For many of them, teaching was a chore; few allowed it to be a challenge. Few had time for creative students.

Concluding thoughts

Pedagogical reforms at SZU were handled almost exclusively within individual academic departments. The Academic Affairs Office was concerned only with the “nuts and bolts” of teaching management, including classroom scheduling, exam administration, the proper filing of teaching plans, etc. The AAO often monitored teaching through spot checks to guarantee that classes were held according to plan. An example from a 1986 report follows:⁶³

On Tuesday morning, April 16, the Academic Affairs Office sent out 12 *ganbu* [cadres] to monitor fourth period discipline in classrooms. There were 23 classes in session, with 888 students in attendance, and on the whole, classroom order was excellent. When the bell rang, the great majority of students quickly and quietly entered their rooms. Sixteen classrooms had very orderly atmospheres; six were just average; and one class was deficient in order. Most teachers paid attention to correctness, lectured with sincerity, and most students listened dedicatedly to their words, cooperating to make the learning experience lively. However, the following problems were discovered:

- one teacher did not pay attention to proper procedure, lecturing while seated on a desk;
- one teacher came to class two minutes after the bell, and one student was 20 minutes late;
- generally teachers finished their lectures before the bell rings; in eight classes, teachers finished with less than five minutes to go; in one class, with five-to-ten minutes left; and in three classes, with between 15 and 20 minutes remaining in the period;
- fairly many students—about 70 or so—wore slippers to class, which were very ugly to look at; one student wore an undershirt to class, and one student came in shorts;
- there were also students who napped in class, ten with their heads resting upon desks, the longest for a half-hour, with the teacher saying nothing;
- in most classrooms, after class ended, the lights and air-conditioning were not turned off, and the windows were not closed.

Our school’s teaching environment, as mentioned, is quite good, but we have to go a step or two further...We urge all to self-consciously respect classroom discipline, and create an outstanding teaching atmosphere.

As this report illustrates, AAO was concerned with management issues, not teaching quality. The content of classroom teaching was rarely reviewed.

The university administration delegated responsibilities in curriculum design and pedagogy to department heads, who usually further delegated responsibilities to a sub-leader in charge of academics (as was the case with CECL as noted above). Concerns over teaching often had to take the back burner to other more pressing issues, many of which were political in nature. To a great extent, the upper levels of SZU did not interfere. The Luo administration believed that teaching would be improved by market mechanisms: if students were free to choose courses and teachers, they would select the best teachers, and the worst teachers would get no students. This hardly ever happened because, in fact, students' tight schedules permitted little flexibility. Luo and his associates also supported self-study. They encouraged students to register for a course, purchase the text, and study on their own for the exam. Self-study was acknowledged to be more productive than sitting through classes with uninspiring teachers. Students took this advice to heart. By the late 1980s, class attendance plummeted below 50%. Several of my students at that time were taking 70 hours of classes per week, enrolled in as many as three classes in a given time slot. Administrations that followed Luo abandoned the market mechanism, and class attendance was made compulsory.

Most universities in China have over the years operated teaching-research offices (*jiao yan shi*) at the departmental level. Teachers who teach sections of the same course work together on a unified plan. They often attend each other's classes for mutual monitoring. In SZU's early years, teaching-research offices were not set-up, reportedly because of insufficient personnel, as noted in the last chapter. Instead, teachers were encouraged to develop their own courses, and there was no need seen for teachers to work in groups. For one thing, since the school was small there were only a few cases where teachers taught sections of the same course (usually public courses such as English, Chinese, politics and PE). In the departments' annual reports published in the yearbooks, only Law in 1987 mentioned this type of mutual auditing by teachers. AAO introduced the concept of auditing in 1991, but it was primarily leaders at the department and upper level, not teachers, who were encouraged to do the monitoring. IFT, as noted earlier, in 1992 started to fine teachers who failed to monitor their colleagues. In 1993 the Chinese Department encouraged the auditing of new teachers by experienced teaching staff. That year saw the establishment of a 10-person Teaching Monitoring Office and a vice-president was hired solely for teaching (relieving vice-president Zheng of this portfolio.) All this was part of the preparation for the 1995 accreditation to show the SEDC that SZU was tak-

ing measures to improve teaching quality and management. Over the years departmental monitoring efforts in Foreign Language, Management, Electronics, Law and Social Sciences were praised in the *News Briefs*.⁶⁴ But it appears that efforts at peer review did little to change teaching quality. Monitoring was *pro forma* at best, and teaching quality remained low. Departments where students were relatively satisfied—namely Architecture, Law, Management and Electronics—and where teaching was perceived as above average remained so. No actions by the leadership affected this one way or the other. Departments where students were more dissatisfied continued to teach poorly.

Three departments—Architecture, Electronics, and Math—where students spent much time working on their own in laboratories or studios had among the highest student satisfaction levels in my 1993 survey. This seems to suggest that laboratory work itself made for a successful pedagogy, at least as defined by student satisfaction. Yet, departments with somewhat more dissatisfied students—Chemistry, Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering and Physics—also stressed laboratory work. Thus laboratory work by itself probably did not ensure a satisfying pedagogy. To be successful, lab work had to be integrated into a larger framework where class lectures were seen as useful and necessary by the students. This occurred in Architecture and Electronics. In the arts majors, only Chinese, Management and Law students were relatively satisfied with their classes.⁶⁵ In other arts majors—business and foreign language—students felt that they would miss nothing if they skipped classes. They felt no need to attend classes; they could study the material on their own. Why was the pedagogy in these majors so unsuccessful?

Students were most critical of the teachers who were perceived as not taking their classroom duties seriously. The example of one of FLD's translation teachers serves to illustrate. During class periods this instructor would assign students several passages to translate. While students sat at their desks translating the passages; the teacher left the classroom to attend to personal and administrative matters. He would return before the final bell and collect the papers. The following class he would hand the students back their papers with corrections. These corrections, according to the students, were minor and not very helpful. Students resented being treated like primary school pupils.

Instructors who spent most of their energy on side-businesses were seen by students as not giving proper respect to the students. The close relationships between student and teacher that have traditionally characterized all

levels of Chinese education were absent in many SZU departments. Students felt abandoned and they responded to this rejection by, in turn, rejecting their teachers. On a number of occasions students told me that they did not respect their teachers. Similarly, many teachers confided that they had little respect for their students, whom generally they considered spoiled little emperors (*xiaohuangdi*).

Another set of constraints that prevented pedagogical reform was structural in nature. A teacher shortage in the late 1980s required large classes in many SZU majors. In these situations teachers had little choice but to employ the one-way lecturing style. These courses did not have accompanying tutorials, which the lecturer or a teaching assistant would conduct. SZU had few teaching assistants and no certified graduate program whose students could serve as tutors. Even if adequate personnel for tutorials had existed, students' schedules were too tight to fit them in. Of course, lectures *ipso facto* need not be mere repetitions of the textbook. Certainly some teachers at SZU gave interesting, even inspiring, talks (in the Chinese Department especially). But most teachers did not. Their presentations put students to sleep. Few teachers were interested in changing their style of teaching; they had more important issues to worry about, such as how to earn extra income to augment their salary.

Real change can be daunting. Luo Zhengqi had encouraged teachers to take risks, once saying that when teaching experiments failed, the responsible teachers would not be penalized. There was no such assurance offered in the politicized atmosphere of the university in the 1990s. By then few teachers at SZU were motivated to try new ways of teaching. At that time student evaluations had become part of routine teaching management, and teachers became even more reluctant to take chances and make changes that might result in negative student feedback. The major instance of pedagogical reform at SZU in the 1990s involved the introduction of A/V technology. This "reform" encouraged teachers to use overhead projectors rather than the blackboard. The reform was heralded by the AAO as a "great advance" in classroom learning. Sadly, this suggests just how the office in charge of SZU's teaching perceived pedagogy. AAO acted as if the only element that needed to be changed involved technology, a structural element. Perhaps this was the only element they felt that could be changed.

The focus on the collective in pedagogical style at SZU limited creativity among individuals. This is not to say that individuals were not important. Quite the contrary. The university's very mission was to produce *rencai* for the Shenzhen SEZ. In this regard, the unit was the individual, not the collec-

tive. But in teaching style, the collective won out. Many students at SZU evidenced degrees of creativity, using Gardner's definition given earlier, but they did so outside the structured learning environment of the university. SZU's pedagogy itself did not generally provide a vehicle for critical and creative thinking. The *rencai* function of higher education in China is, of course, not *prima facie* inconsistent with an education that spurs creativity. In fact, Chinese educational reformers promote this type of education for China's future *rencai*:⁶⁶

...[students] should learn not just existing knowledge, but more importantly, their ability to discover new knowledge should be cultivated. Teachers should provide students with 'hunting rifles' to enable them to seek knowledge on their own, and not just hand over 'field rations' for them to eat. The aim of providing 'hunting rifles' is to train a vast number of specialized personnel who possess a high degree of intellectual ability and creativity.

Few SZU students, other than those in a few select majors (Chinese, Architecture, Electronics) were entrusted with such 'hunting rifles.'

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1. Source: *Department of Management, Shenzhen University* [booklet, 1993], pp. 26-30. Both years offered Industrial/Commercial Enterprise Management; 1993 included Real Estate Management.
 2. *Management Department, Shenzhen University, 1983-1992* [booklet, 1993], p. 21.
 3. Pei Quanzhong, "On the 'dialog' style of teaching," *Shenda Tongxun*, 1990, no. 9, pp. 25-8. Whether Pei actually used the methods he wrote about is in doubt. None of his five former students interviewed said his pedagogy was any different from that of their other teachers.
 4. Boisot, "Two models of learning," 1992, p. 25.
 5. See generally Watkins & Biggs, *The Chinese Learner*, 1996. Although the data and findings presented in that volume concern CHCs outside the PRC, much appears relevant to teaching and learning in Mainland China.
 6. Biggs, "Western misperceptions of the Confucian-heritage learning culture," 1996, p. 57 [typo corrected].
 7. Marton, Dall'Alba & Tse, "Memorizing and understanding," 1996.
 8. Tang, "Collaborative learning," 1996.
 9. Volet & Renshaw, "Chinese students at an Australian university," 1996, pp. 205-20.
 10. Lynn, "The case method," 1992.
 11. These and other games are found in Sadow, *Idea Bank*, 1982. See also Heyworth, *Discussion*, 1984.

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12. Outlines for other skits appear in Agelasto, "Roleplaying helps inactive students," 1991.
 13. Watkins & Dillingham, *Practical English Handbook*, 1982; Flynn & Glaser, *Writer's Handbook*, 1984; Coats & Sandel, *Paragraph Writing*, 1986. Pirated copies of these and other texts were purchased by the FLD—actually the foreign teacher made the purchase and was later reimbursed—and resold to students. In the late 1980s before China had signed the international copyright convention, foreign language bookstores in China maintained backrooms to which foreigners were generally denied entry. In several cases, students made the actual purchases for the foreign teacher.
 14. Watkins & Dillingham, *Practical English Workbook*, 1982; and Glaser, *Workbook for Writer's Handbook*, 1984.
 15. Zhang & Chen, "Techniques to teach writing," 1989.
 16. For ideas see Lui, "From craft to art, 1989," p. 26; Runkle, "A technique to teach writing," 1988.
 17. See Agelasto, "Computers and academic writing," 1993.
 18. Howard, *Idioms in American life*, 1987; McPartland, *Take it Easy*, 1981; Walker, *Nelson Practical Book on Phrasal Verbs*, 1982.
 19. Josephson, "Marking EFL compositions," 1989.
 20. This technique is described in Kehe and Kehe, "The pre-research paper research paper," 1989.
 21. Shanghai Publishing House for Foreign Language Education, 1988. A full issue of a journal published by the Guangzhou Institute of Foreign Languages was devoted to CECL. See *Research on Foreign Language Teaching in Higher Education [Waiguoyu gaojiao yanjiu]*, 1993, no. 6.
 22. Li, "In defence of the communicative approach." See also Penner, "Change and Conflict," 1995.
 23. Kuhlman, *Agony in Education*, 1994, 201-204.
 24. Johnson & Johnson, *Learning Together and Alone*, 1994, pp. 57-8. Examples of creativity-generating techniques that involve cooperative learning may be found in "Synectics," Chapter Ten, in Joyce & Weil, *Models of Teaching*, 1986, pp. 159-83; and Conroy, "Classroom management," 1993, pp. 248-53.
 25. Bezine, *Children of the Pearl*, 1991; Bezine, *On Wings of Destiny*, 1992; Bezine, *Temple of The Moon*, 1992; Chung, *The Incorporation of Eric Chung*, 1984; Kingston, *Tripmaster Monkey*, 1989; Kingston, *Woman Warrior*, 1977; Kingston, *China Men*, 1981; Lao, *Mr. Ma and Son*, 1991; Lee, *China Boy*, 1991; Liao, *The Lotus Blossoms*, 1953; Liu, *Two Years in the Melting Pot*, 1984; Mo, *Sour Sweet*, 1982; Tan, *Three Sisters of Sz*, 1989; Robinson, *The Chinese*, 1983; Spence, *The Question of Hu*, 1988; Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 1989; Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, 1991; Tan, *Letters from Thailand*, 1991; Theroux, *Fong and the Indians*, 1976; Zhou, *Manhattan's China Lady*, 1992.

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26. Shirk, *Competitive Comrades*, 1982, p. 161.
 27. University of California, Berkeley, Chancellor Chang-Lin Tien made this point in an address at Hong Kong University, 19 December 1994. The speculation is also discussed by I-M. Liu, "Chinese Cognition," 1986, p. 104. This seems to be a widely held perception although it has not been subjected to severe academic scrutiny. A vitriolic cultural critic contends Confucianism has strangled intellectuals' imaginations and stunted their reasoning. See Bo, *The Ugly Chinaman*, 1992, p. 20.
 28. Bo, *The Ugly Chinaman*, 1992, p. 20.
 29. Lipman, Sharp & F.S. Oscanyan, *Philosophy in the Classroom*, 1980.
 30. Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 1991, pp. 174-182.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
 32. This is illustrated throughout the compilation by Glover, Ronning & Reynolds, *Handbook of Creativity*. See also Getzels & Jackson, *Creativity and Intelligence*, 1962.
 33. E.g., Guilford, "Three faces of intellect," 1959.
 34. Torrance, *Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking*, 1966.
 35. Biggs & Moore, *The Process of Learning*, 1993, Chapters Six and Seven.
 36. Gardner, *Creating Minds*, 1993.
 37. Gardner, *Frames of Mind*, 1985.
 38. Gardner, *Creating Minds*, 1993, p. 20.
 39. See also Perkins, "Creativity by design," 1984.
 40. Gardner, *Creating Minds*, 1993, p. 35.
 41. Zhou, *Education in Contemporary China*, 1990, p. 369.
 42. _____, "Education reform," *China Daily*, 1985.
 43. Zhu, "Institutions of higher education should readjust structure," 1985.
 44. Liu, "The significance of recent reforms for higher education," 1987, pp. 162-71.
 45. Lo, "State patronage of intellectuals," 1991, p. 696 [footnote omitted].
 46. Löfstedt, *Human Resources in Chinese Education*, 1990, p. 180.
 47. Liu Wenxiu, "The significance of recent reforms for higher education," 1987, p. 166.
 48. Li, "On evolving aims of education and curriculum reform in Mainland China," 1993, p. 7.
 49. Huang, "A cursory talk on reform in job allocation," 1993, pp. 109-14.
 50. Liu, "New subject faced by higher education," 1989.
 51. Wang & Huang, "College students are facing the selection," 1989.
 52. Chen & Liu, "Deep thoughts on tertiary students job allocation," 1992. Also, for the argument that Chinese students in the US should cultivate individualism, see Huff, "Science and civilizations east and west," 1993, pp. 77ff.
 53. Ford, *The Twain Shall Meet*, 1988, p. 50.

54. Woronov, *China through My Window*, 1988, p. 236.
55. Thompson, Ellis & Wildavsky, *Cultural Theory*, 1990.
56. Ho, "Chinese Patterns of Socialization," 1986, pp. 35-6.
57. Ho & Chiu, "Component ideas of individualism, collectivism, and social organization," 1994, p. 154. This study involved an empirical analysis of over 2,000 popular sayings.
58. Ho, "Chinese patterns of socialization," 1986, p. 86.
59. Gardner, *To Open Minds*, 1989, pp. 256-84.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 250.
61. Ross, *China Learns English*, 1993, p. 10.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
63. "Report on classroom discipline, 25 April 1986," cited in Pollack, *Civilizing Chinese*, 1997, pp. 269-70 [Author's bracketed comment removed].
64. *New Brief* # 464 (22 September 1995), #595 (30 October 1996), #342 (13 May 1994), #204 (16 June 1992) and #419 (14 April 1995).
65. This perception of student satisfaction in the Chinese Department derives from interviews, not survey results, as discussed in the previous chapter.
66. Feng, Zhang & Tao, "New thinking concerning the reform of higher education," 1984.