

Navigating through Uncertainty: An Explorative Study of Managers' Experiences in China-foreign Cooperative Higher Education

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Abstract : To drive practical interpretations and applications of various policies in building the transnational education joint-ventures, middle managers learn to navigate through uncertainties and ambiguities. However, the current literature views very little about those middle managers' experiences, perceptions, and practices. This paper takes the empirical approach and aims to uncover the middle managers' experiences by conducting interviews, campus visits, and document analysis. Following the qualitative research method approach, the researchers gathered information from a mixture of fourteen foreign and Chinese managers. Their perceptions of the China-foreign cooperation in higher education and their perceived roles have offered important, valuable insights to this group of people's attitudes and management performances. The diverse cultural and demographic backgrounds contributed to the significance of the study. There are four key findings. One, middle managers' immediate micro-contexts and individual attitudes are the top two influential factors in managers' performances. Two, the foreign middle managers showed a stronger sense of self-identity in risk-taking. Three, the Chinese middle managers preferred to see difficulties as part of their assigned responsibilities. Four, middle managers in independent universities demonstrated a stronger sense of belonging and fewer frustrations than middle managers in secondary institutes. The researchers propose that training for managers in a transnational educational setting should consider these discoveries when select fitting topics and content. In particular, middle managers should be better prepared to anticipate their everyday jobs in the micro-environment; hence, information concerning sponsor organizations' working culture is as essential as knowing the national and local regulations, and socio-culture. Different case studies can help the managers to recognize and celebrate the diversity in transnational education. Situational stories can help them to become aware of the diverse and wide range of work contexts so that they will not feel to be left alone when facing challenges without relevant previous experience or training. Though this research is a case study based in the Chinese transnational higher education setting, the implications could be relevant and comparable to other transnational higher education situations and help to continue expanding the potential applications in this field.

Keywords : educational management, middle manager performance, transnational higher education

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