Transformative Learning and Social Transformation: A Cross-Cultural Perspective

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
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0-612-50488-3
ABSTRACT

Many studies in transformation theory have placed emphasis on the micro aspects of personal change, while the intersection of the learning activity within societal structure remains unattended to. This study attempts to develop the social dimension of transformative learning: learning process in the context of social transformation and the interchange between personal transformation and social paradigm shift. A four-step model is established to analyze the individual perspective change in the process of social paradigm shift. The current educational transformation in China is presented as a case study. To facilitate transformative learning, the educator’s role and the need for vision are discussed. The research holds that the cross-cultural study is significant to develop vision and transformative learning has strong potential for a vivid dialogue between Canadian and Chinese culture because both have a rich tradition of discussion of transformative learning.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When first entering the field of transformation theory, my philosophic intuition tells me that, in addition to its development in recent decades in the West, Chinese culture has a rich tradition in recognition and study of personal and social transformation, and this is an area where a higher level of cultural dialogue between the West and East needs to be opened. An academic adventure would be worthwhile.

In this venture I deeply thank my supervisor, Professor Edmund Sullivan for his guidance and advice. His course and book, entitled Transformative Learning: Educational Vision for the 21st Century, have provided the opportunity for animated analysis of broad topics, active participation, vision and enthusiasm in transformative education. My gratitude also goes to Professor Budd Hall, whose classroom discussion is where the transformation theory and cross-cultural dialogue are highly valued and inspired; as well as to Professor Saeed Quazi, Dr. Darlene Clover, Ms. Martin Johnson and Ms. Kristen Ligers, who read the manuscript with their helpful feedback and comments; and particularly to my wife Chunming Zhang, whose support and encouragement has sustained me for completion of the work.

Ching Miao, Toronto
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INTRODUCTION

Human society is a process and at all levels of its complexity, it undergoes a constant change. The change at the macro level is involved in economy, polity and culture; at the micro level in individual actions or interactions. The process of social development is full of contradictions and struggle, and so is personal development. When people experience dramatic social changes in their lives, find themselves experiencing contradictions and are led to reflect and question something they have previously believed, they may change their perspectives. Through this process transformative learning has taken place. This research attempts to discuss transformative learning in the context of social transformation and the interchange between personal transformation and social paradigm shift. The first chapter presents the concept of transformative learning from multiple perspectives through a literature review and suggests two needed studies: (1) transformation theory in the cross-cultural context; (2) transformative learning activity in the process of social structural change. In chapter two, transformative learning in the Canadian adult educational tradition and the contributions of Chinese modern and classical philosophy to transformation theory are both highlighted. Chapter three examines the process of transformative learning, presented through a four-step model and the actor's performance in social change. At the turn of the 21st century in China, an educational transformation from an elite to a mass system of higher education is underway. The interchange between perspective transformation and social paradigm change is elaborated in chapter four. Compared with the personal theory focusing on the micro aspects of individual change, chapter five unfolds consciousness raising in the
social context and the facilitation of transformative learning in social change. Finally, the educator's role and the need for vision in paradigm shift, and the vision creating in particular, is considered. This research holds that cross-cultural study is significant to develop vision and transformative learning has strong potential for a vivid dialogue between Canadian and Chinese cultural tradition.
CHAPTER 1

REVIEW OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY
AND FURTHER STUDIES

Theoretical Review of Transformative Learning

When people experience changes in their lives, find themselves in a dilemma or encounter new information that contradicts what they have always believed, they may revise their traditional beliefs and norms (Cranton, 1998). Transformative learning theory is developed to explain the process individuals or collectives go through when transformation takes place.

Transformation, including the social and individual aspects, is involved in change but connotes a particular type of change. In a study of Canadian adult education (Scott, 1998), a set of criteria is provided to determine if a change is transformative: (1) there must be structural change, either social structural transformation or personal transformation or both; (2) the aim of the change is to catalyze a fundamental shift in people’s beliefs and values and must include a social vision about the future based on a value system that includes the struggle for freedom, democracy or equity, and authenticity; (3) there is a shift in what counts as knowledge; and (4) transformation is based on conflict theory which assumes that there are different interests present when humans act to change either personal meaning or social structure. The four criteria for assessing transformation can be applied in both the personal and the social realm.
Personal theories in the transformative process, or the personal dimension of transformative learning, are helpful in explicating the micro aspect of individual change. Contradictions generated by rapid, dramatic change and a diversity of beliefs, values, and social practices are a hallmark of modern society. In order to deal effectively with those changes, rather than merely adapting to changing environments by more diligently applying old ways of knowing, individuals need to discover new perspectives to develop their understanding of changing events and a higher degree of control over their lives (Mezirow, 1991, p.3).

Drawing on notions such as scientific paradigm (Kuhn, 1962), personal structure (Kelly, 1963) and perceptual filters (Roth, 1990), Mezirow developed his framework of transformative learning to describe the perspective change: meaning perspective—rule systems of habitual expectation or personal paradigms, and meaning schemes—knowledge, beliefs, value judgment that constitute a specific interpretation. Both influence the way people define, understand, and act upon our experience.

There are three types of meaning perspectives. Epistemic perspectives pertain to the way of learning styles and the way people use knowledge; socio-linguistic perspectives are about the understanding of social norms, culture and the way people use language; psychological perspectives concern self-concepts. These types of perspectives are overlap and influence one another. According to Mezirow (1991, p.155), it is the perspective transformation that leads towards a more inclusive, permeable and integrated perspective and we all naturally move towards such an orientation. This is the central process of adult development.
Knowledge generation as a form of learning through inquiry is an important aspect of perspective change. There are different types of knowledge and therefore different types of learning. In order to explore the different types of knowledge relating to transformative learning, Mezirow integrated the framework of knowledge orientation into his study. Habermas (1971), a contemporary German social theorist, believes human beings have three basic knowledge interests: a technical interest in controlling and manipulating the environment, a practical interest in understanding people’s behaviour and social norms, and an emancipatory interest in developing people’s self-awareness.

Accordingly, each of these interests leads to a type of knowledge or learning style. The interests in controlling the environment enable people to acquire instrumental knowledge. Such knowledge can be accumulated through instrumental or scientific learning. The practical interests in understanding each other lead to acquiring practical knowledge through the use of language. People gain this kind of knowledge through communicative leaning, according to Mezirow (1991). The emancipatory interests come from people’s desire to improve themselves and better understand themselves, which can be obtained from emancipatory learning. And critical reflection plays a crucial role in emancipatory learning.

Reflection is the central dynamic involved in problem solving, problem posing, and transformation of meaning schemes and meaning perspectives. Critical reflection enables people to change their assumptions and transform their perspectives. With respect to the description of reflection, Dewey’s expression is widely quoted: an active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the ground that support it” (1933). In a similar vein, Mezirow (1991, p.105) describes
reflection as three forms: content, process and premise. People reflect on the content of a problem, on the processes or strategies they are using to deal with the problem and on the basic premise underlying the problem. Content and process reflection can lead to a change of meaning schemes, and premise reflection to a transformation of a meaning perspective.

While explicating reflection, Cranton (1998) argues that not all individuals learn or transform in those ways; reflection may be a different process for different people. The terminology used in transformative learning theory may overwhelm learners and mask the powerful simplicity of the concept. When people are led to reflect on and question something they previously took for granted and thereby change their perspectives, transformative learning has taken place. The change can take place in how they understand themselves, others, knowledge and culture.

Social transformation addresses the broad issues of social change and is useful for analysis of the macro aspect of personal change—the intersection of personal biography within the societal structure, or the so called social dimension of transformative learning (Cunningham, 1998). Canadian adult education studies have focused on social structural change with the individual embedded within the social process. Structure refers to social organization, institutions and cultural products like language and knowledge, or the external context of behaviour. Those social structures are human-made to maintain a sense of order and generate their own history and traditions; they are nevertheless products of human agency past and present and subject to change (Scott, 1998).

The Antigonish Movement in Canadian history is illustrated as a brilliant example of adult transformative learning in the context of social transformation (Scott, 1998). To
contest exploitation within the fishing industry, the fishers in Nova Scotia took action to open a banking co-op and a cannery and so to break away from feudal dependency on growing capitalism. The fishers constructed their own knowledge by re-defining their own experiences and came to new meaning and understanding of their world.

When the oppressed participate in transformative learning, a truly liberating education, they come to a new awareness of self. People develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process (Freire, 1970). The changing individuals structurally have massive connotation for changes in society. Once people begin to understand how society works, they begin to have a different relationship to knowledge and to society. The process is fundamentally social and involves the action of moving back and forth between action in the world and reflection on the action in a growing depth of understanding.

Transformative learning exists in a broad context, which draws on research and ideas from philosophy, psychology, sociology and education. Therefore, it should be described from several points of view for deep understanding. The discussion of the transformative criticism and research have provided an insight into the transformative learning activity.

Since many contemporary “reforms” are concerned about meeting the need of the global competitive market place, Sullivan (1999.p.7) invites people to enter into a deep cultural and personal reflection on the dominant paradigms: industrialism, competitive transnationalism, individualism and globalization economy. The transformative criticism suggests not only a rupture with the past but also the creation of the new
culture—an integral development with the evolutionary process of the universe, the planet, the earth community, the human community and the personal world.

Transformative research is a systematic inquiry directed towards uncovering and interpreting reality located in the conditions which create oppression and hinder self-determination. It produces reflective knowledge which helps people understand and furthermore change their world. Therefore the goal of transformative research is emancipatory social change (Beder, 1991). From this point of view, transformative research is not only a methodology but also an orientation toward research which is defined by its intended outcome: humanistic social change towards producing a more just and equal world.

The essential components of transformative research include the following:

(1) ethical— the study should be conducted in the public interest with consideration of human rights, social justice, reconciliation and environmental sustainability;
(2) emancipatory—research activity should contribute to the reduction and elimination of economic, social, political and technical oppressive structures; (3) empowering—the study should serve the emergence of marginalized and disadvantaged groups and promote the conservation and proliferation of different forms of life; (4) holistic—the research activity should emphasize and identify the relationship and interconnectedness between the part and the whole, the subjective and objective, the micro and macro context, and the local and the global (Deshler & Selener, 1991).

The variety of the above descriptions of transformative study activity reflects the different approaches through which to view and explain transformative learning. Each perspective may be associated with a specific situation. While examining those
definitions, there are four common fundamental characteristics of transformative learning:

- The learning process involves the micro aspects and macro aspects of personal structural change, or the personal dimension and social dimension of transformative learning. There is considerable interchange between the social and personal transformation. Adult education is primarily interested in people, the changing of people to become better contributors to society.

- The aim of transformative learning is emancipatory. It catalyzes a fundamental shift in people's beliefs and values and contributes to the reduction and elimination of economic, social, political and technical oppressive structures. Transformative learning empowers the emergence of marginalized and disadvantaged groups and promote the conservation and proliferation of different forms of life;

- Transformative learning is an action-oriented and holistic approach which integrates knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and actions. Knowledge generation is a form of learning through inquiry. In fulfilling its goal of self-determination, social change, and individual and community empowerment, transformative learning is oriented towards praxis.

- The central process of transformative learning is the critical reflection. Reflection is involved in problem solving, problem posing, and perspective change. When people
are led to reflect on and question the assumptions they previously took for granted and thereby change their views, transformative learning has taken place.

**Further Studies: Transformative Learning From a Cross-Cultural Perspective and in the Context of Social Change**

There are some questions still remaining after this discussion. Further research could address such elements as the development of transformative theory in the cross-cultural context and transformative learning activity in the process of social transformation.

In a changing world, contradictions generated by rapid change often require people to find new perspectives to gain a better understanding of the environment and a higher degree of control over their lives. Probably where there are dilemmas, there would be opportunities leading to reflection and developing the theory of transformation.

Therefore, the thinking and studying for a theory that transcends conventional social structure is not unique to current decades and western culture, even though it is commonly acknowledged that from the 1980s on adult education has been systematically given the framework and language for a deep understanding of transformation theory. The inquiry, ideas and values concerning transformative study and analysis may exist in different cultures. For example, in China, dealing with the challenges individuals face and facilitating people's perspective transformation has long been a subject in academic discussion. Some thoughts can even be traced to two thousand years ago. The cultural dialogue on transformation theory will be discussed fully in the following section.
With respect to transformative learning in the context of social transformation or the social dimension of transformative learning, there are two interrelated directions needing further discussion: how can social changes and movements affect persons’ critical reflection and perspective transformation, and how can people who have undergone perspective change bring great influence on social changes?

Personal transformation involves a sequence of learning activities that begin with some difficulties or problems and end with a changed self-concept. The process of perspective transformation can be divided into several stages. A model of transformation in six steps is developed to analyze the personal transformation (Taylor, 1989):

Phase 1: Generation of Consciousness
   
   Step 1: Encountering trigger events
   
   Step 2: Confronting reality

Phase 2: Transformation of Consciousness
   
   Step 3: Reaching the transition point
      
      (a) Decision to shift vision of reality
      
      (b) Dramatic leap or shift that “just happens” in a way not consciously planned
   
   Step 4: Shift or leap of transcendence

Phase 3: Integration of consciousness
   
   Step 5: Personal commitment
   
   Step 6: Grounding and development
The trigger events are the variety of circumstances ranging from micro level and macro level. The personal occurrence may be a series of dilemma such as illness, separation or divorce, children leaving home, career transition or retirement; a disorienting dilemma caused by an eye-opening discussion, book. The social events are something like social movements and upheavals, natural disasters, or experience of different culture. The generation of consciousness could be resulted from an expected worldview, appropriation of some perspective promoted by a charismatic leader or created in a special cultural circle. In step 4, a shift or leap indicates an awareness that a new perspective transcends an old one. Step 5 and step 6 involve a commitment to and implementation of the new perspective.

The analysis of the process of perspective transformation suggests social and cultural events can have great impact on people's attitude. "Reversing is the movement of the Tao" is called by Lao Tzu (Feng, 1976, p.99) as practicing enlightenment which means if one wants to achieve anything, one must start with its opposite. With respect to the transformative learning, therefore, if we want to get an insight into the personal dimension of learning process, we must examine its opposite—the social dimension of transformation learning. Then we have the perspective of both alternatives.
CHAPTER 2

CULTURAL DIALOGUE OF TRANSFORMATION THEORY BETWEEN CANADIAN AND CHINESE CULTURAL TRADITION

Transformative Learning as Canadian Adult Educational Tradition

Historically siding with the oppressed and poor, a fundamental element of Canadian adult education is that the transformative education, a study of the social and political context taking social emancipation and democracy as priority, is highly valued. "The ideals and values revolving around social equity, democracy and social transformation have guided adult students' learning, research and actions and these have in turn influenced the goals set by policy makers" (Scott, et al. 1998, p.13). Traditions, originating with Frontier College, the Antigonish Movement, Citizen's Forum and Women's Institutes, have provided interpretation and direction for Canadian education as well as social democracy. (Selman, 1998)

Another characteristic of adult education is that it keeps the balance between materialistic and spiritual needs. Addressing the social context does not mean ignoring the needs for skills. It was clearly claimed in the principles of the Antigonish Movement, "Individuals are most concerned with economic needs--therefore education much start with economic dimension of life". On the one hand, the needs for social context were also emphasized in the principles: "the root of social reform lies in education". (Gillen, 1998) To a large extent, the philosophy of Canadian adult educational is so similar to
Chinese educational tradition that while reading *the Spiritual Lessons from the Antigonish Movement*—Coady’s ideals that the full and abundant life for everyone, including material and spiritual, vocational and intellectual needs, cannot be compartmentalized (Gillen, 1998), one may wonder if the article is written by a Chinese author.

Transformative learning and critical pedagogy are considered most worthwhile in Canadian adult education. Educators not only call for learning to live, but also learning to think freely and critically, with the hope of constructing modern adult education as a significant social emancipatory force. Within the framework of a socially oriented understanding of transformation, transformative learning in Canadian adult education is highly emancipatory and social in nature.

Perhaps the primary reason that people are in favour of transformative learning is that it could facilitate problem solving, problem posing and perspective transformation. Theory in action is significant in Canadian transformation theory. For instance, in *Learning for Life*, knowledge of environment (Clover, 1998) has, for the first time, come to an adult educational textbook. Questioning the dominant culture of globalization and exploring the alternative development is the main theme of this book.

**Contributions of Chinese Philosophy to Transformation Theory**

A survey of the literature on social theory shows transformative learning and analysis is also highly valued by Chinese scholars. There is a considerable literature on discussion of the principles of transformation theory both in modern and classical period of China.
Of the classical social and philosophical theories, Lao Tzu as Taoism is an authoritative textbook in which some principles of transformation theory are thoughtfully discussed. The primary concern of earliest Taoist thought is how to preserve life and avoid harm and danger (Feng, 1976, p.99). The reflection leads to the theoretical development of pursuing the perfect life and society in Taoism, which involves transformative analysis. The major thoughts concerning transformative learning, in my understanding, are:

**Distinction of the High Order Thinking**

By 200 BC, Chinese thinkers had already found out that there are different levels of thinking. The notion of “reversing is the movement of the Tao” may be laughed at loudly by the lower thinking (Lao-Tzu, 1989, p.154), and therefore critical reflection as a high order thinking should be distinguished from ordinary knowledge. “To pursue (survival) learning one increases daily, to pursue Tao one decreases daily” (1989, p.168) “Tao”, to my knowledge, means going beyond a pragmatic learning and getting a vision of transformation. Lao Tzu noticed that talking about development without a long term view, only pursuing survival skills, may lead to a disaster. He said: “Knowing when to stop that they do not become exhausted” (1989, p.162), and reminded people to examine where they are headed.

**Dynamic Change**

According to the tradition of Chinese culture, the perfect development is the one that can access the everlast. However, the everlast being is not static but constantly changing. As
the everlasting transcends all determination and cannot be named, “Tao that can be spoken of, is not the Everlasting Tao” (Lao-Tzu, 1989, p.51). Chinese philosophy considers the changes in society and nature as a constant and natural process. In an everlasting sense, it is easily understood that “when things are full-grown they become old” (1989, p.185), and “one who distinguishes is not good” (1989, p.231). This is because the things distinguished would be full growth.

**An Integral Development Vision**

In order to access the everlasting, it is no surprise that Chinese philosophers uphold the oneness of humanity and nature, and say “know harmony is to know the everlasting, know everlasting is to be illumined” (Lao-Tzu, 1989, p.184). Obviously, Taoism believes that pursuing harmony is the key issue for things to be sustainably developed.

**Tao in Action**

To put theory into action is a prominent characteristic of Chinese culture. When Lao Tzu was asked where Tao is, he pointed out Tao is in daily life. In Taoism, the deepest truth is plainest and easy to understand and carry out (Lao-Tzu, 1989, p.214).

The book of Lao-Tzu was written two thousand years ago, during which Chinese society experienced a dramatic transformation. As a summary of and meditation on social change, Lao Tzu still provides enlightenment to today’s people when they encounter social changes.
In 20th century China, two famous shifts in theory, the so-called "Emancipation of Mind" took place. One was, during the 1930s, from following Russian revolutionary theory to constructing a Chinese one, Mao's revolutionary theory. At that time, Mao established his principles of transformation theory: (1) theory learning and application, no matter whether from foreign culture or history, should be presented through critical analysis and thinking of the Chinese developmental situation (Selected Works Vol.2,1965, p.17); (2) in the process of social transformation, the personal transformation can not be separated from the social change. "The revolutionary people to change the world comprises the fulfillment of the following tasks: to change the objective world and, at the same time, their own subjective world—to change their cognitive ability and change the relations between the subjective and the objective world (Selected Works Vol.1,1965, p.308); (3) the perspective transformation, or in Mao's words—the truth discovery and worldview change, is constant movement between the action (practice) and the reflection on the action (knowledge). "Practice, knowledge, again practice, and again knowledge. This form repeats itself in endless cycles, and with each cycle the content of practice and knowledge rises to a higher level. Such is the whole of the dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge, and such is the dialectical-materialist theory of the unity of knowing and doing" (Selected Works Vol.1,1965, p.308).

The other was, during the 1980s, from a planned economic theory to a market one. After making a critical reflection on the crisis of the conventional development model, people were encouraged to emancipate their minds, explore new ways and generate new ideas in modernization (Deng, 1984). Chinese scholars recovered the origins of Maoism: the criterion for judging the subjective intention is social practice and effect (Mao,
Selected Works Vol. 1, 1965, p. 295). Given the undesirable effect of Mao’s closed-door policy, the old paradigm was abandoned and China entered an open-door period.

High level Cultural Exchange Between Canadian and Chinese Tradition

From the above brief discussion of transformation theory in Canada and China, we may find that there are some common values shared with the two cultural traditions.

Both lay emphasis on the social dimension of transformative learning as well as the interchange between personal and social transformation. In Canada, transformation is participatory, emancipatory and social in nature. Studies involve the socially oriented understanding of transformation, the “individuation” of the person is possible as the group matures (Scott, 1998). In China, from the traditional principle “sageliness within and kingliness without”—people accomplishing spiritual cultivation should be king (Feng, 1976, p. 8)—to Mao’s monograph On Practice, it has long been a subject of Chinese philosophy in discussion of how people’s perspective can be transformed and then they, with a new worldview, have powerful influence over social change.

Both treasure an integral development vision and pursue harmony. Canadian adult education addresses the spiritual needs as well as the economic and social needs of people (Gillen, 1998). Likewise, the golden mean, “never too much” or keeping balance stands high in Chinese cultural favour (Feng, 1976, p. 20).

A major concern in integral development is the oneness of nature and humanity. While the planetary consciousness (Sullivan, 1999, p. 228) suggests moving beyond the individualistic self towards an ecological self, which evokes the deep sense of affirming
the interconnectedness of the human and non-human world, this may be consistent with the stand of Chinese philosophy—harmonious unity, "all things are nurtured together without injuring on another. All courses are pursued without collision. Harmony of the sort presents not only human society but also the entire universe (Feng, 1976, p.174).

As has been shown in the above, the critical thinking is highly valued by both perspectives. When recognizing that people must learn to be critical of these powerful voices such as globalization and commercial culture that is destructive to our planet (Sullivan, 1999, p.40), and that the man who keeps danger in mind is one who survives (Feng, 1976, p.172), we may find that the consideration of those fundamental issues of human development is the intellectual tradition in both the West and East.
CHAPTER 3

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING IN THE PROCESS OF
SOCIAL STRUCTURAL CHANGE

Mover of Social Structural Change and Paradigm Shift

In explicating how individual transformation is affected by social change, transformative learning theory needs to be expanded by the frameworks of social agency and paradigm shift. The former, through inquiry into the sources of social change, is useful in examining what aspects and dimensions of the social system would have the greatest influence on changing people’s value and belief. The latter characterizes the process of the shift from dominant paradigm to emergent paradigm. The synthesized transformation framework, as a lens through which to view and explain individuals as actors engaged in transformative learning, will provide a vivid picture of social becoming—the actors being shaped and shaping the changing structure, and the phases in transformative learning process.

A major concern or ambition in social theory is the inquiry of the prime movers of social processes. Since the dawn of human self-reflection, people have been seeking the answer of the dynamic of social change, the causes and the forces or the agency responsible for their own fate. At the beginning, the agency was placed outside the human and social world, where some personified deities and metaphysical providence were active. Next, the agency was brought to earth, located in slowly unravelling natural forces of various sorts, such as climatic, geographical and astronomical determinants.
And then agency was located in Great Men: heroes, sages, leaders, inventors and geniuses. The agency became humanized but not yet socialized (Sztompka, 1993, p.191).

Until modernization, the factors underlying the social change were analyzed from the viewpoint of socialization. In Marxian historical materialism, economy and technology are regarded as the basic forces in change. Social theory for Weber studies social action, meaningful conduct directed towards others and oriented to their actual response. Ideology and spirit play the central role in the Weberian’s framework. In some anthropologic study, social evolution embraces different levels of culture: techno-economics is most often decisive; ideology is likely to be a secondary and derivative force in the hierarchy of social causation; socio-politics often occupies the periphery (Steward, 1997).

Among innumerable versions of social determinisms indicating various factors as crucial, two main categories of social processes stand out. One, the so-called materialist processes, places emphasis on the ‘hard’ technological, economic, environmental, or biological pressures. The other, idealistic processes, recognizes ideas, ideology, religion and ethos as the cause of social process (Sztompka, 1993, p.22). Current social theory has a tendency to abandon such distinctions and treat the causation of processes as contingent, involving the complex interplay of multiple forces and factors.

Social process is regulated by rules. The order of norms, values and institutions regulating human conduct is considered as the central aspect of social change by many social scientists (Durkheim, 1972; Parsons, 1951, Segerstedt, 1966). Interestingly, in early sociological study the agency became socialized, but has become somewhat dehumanized again. After the critical reflection: “let us get men back in, and let us put
some blood in them” (Homans, 1971, p.113), modern theory of agency has returned to
the idea that men make their own history. Human action as an actor has returned to the
center of history (Tourine, 1988). At the same time, the opposite side of the agency-
structure equation is taken up by the theory of rule system. The focus is not on the actors
who shape, but rather on the structures being shaped. “Human activity-in all of its
extraordinary variety and organized and governed largely by socially determined rules
and rule systems” (Burns & Flam, 1987, p.viii)

While focusing on the opposition of action and structure and attempting to bridge
it, i.e. “reversing is the movement of the Tao” (Feng, 1976, p.97), a summary of the
theory of agency shows it has been significantly enriched (Sztompka,1993, p.191). The
ultimate motor of change is the agential power of human individuals and social
collectivities. Action occurs in the context of encountered structures resulting in the dual
quality of structures as both shaping and being shaped, and the dual quality of actors as
both producers and products. The interchange of action and structure occurs in time, by
means of alternating phases of agential creativeness and structural determination.

The discussion of social structural change and its dynamic suggests two
fundamental characteristics which are useful for analysis of personal transformation.
First, the exploration of the dynamic of social change, from the dehumanized to
humanized and socialized, shows many variations come into play, ranging from ‘hard’
technology, economy and politics to ‘soft’ ideology, ideas and social relations. To some
extent, the structural influence on personal transformation, given the interplay of those
factors, cannot be compartmentalized.
Second, in the process of social change, it is people that make their own history. The individuals or collectivities as actors engaged in transformative learning play dual roles—not only being shaped by the rule system but also shaping social structure and making history. This dual role performance is vividly expressed in Mao’s study of war, the most changeable structure in society: unquestionably, victory or defeat in war is determined by the military, political, economic and natural conditions, but not by those alone. It is also determined by an actor’s performance—a military man’s competence and creativity in directing the war. “In his endeavour to win a war, a military man cannot overstep the limitations imposed by the material conditions; within these limitations, however, he can and must strive for victory. The stage of action for a military and is built upon objective material conditions, but on that stage he can direct the performance of many drama, full of sound and color, power and grandeur” (Selected Works Vol.1, 1965, p.191)

In description of the interaction between people’s action and structural change, the modern theory of agency provides us with a clear picture of the interchange between personal transformation and social transformation.

Transformative learning is a process involving an enhanced level of awareness of the content of people’s beliefs, a critique of their assumptions, a decision to negate an old perspective in favour of a new one. The framework of paradigm shift is useful in analyzing what constitutes transformative learning process and how it is affected by social change.

Paradigm as an academic concept can be traced back to Kuhn’s study *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (1962). A paradigm is related to the foundation of scientific
practice, such as law, theory, application and instrumentation. In learning a paradigm, scientists acquire theory, methods and standards together. The study explained the way a paradigm becomes outdated and the mechanisms by which a new one emerges to replace it. During the period of paradigm change—a scientific revolution, scientists’ worldviews are dramatically changed and they are responding to a different world (1962).

There is little consensus among theorists regarding what constitutes transformative learning process. Some scholars are reluctant to view transformation theory as a stage theory, because a form of developmental progress in adulthood does not follow clearly defined steps (Mezirow, 1991, p.152). However, transformative learning emphasizes the importance of the movement towards reflectivity in adulthood as a function of intentionality and sees it advanced through increased ability and experience. Therefore, the learning activity is a process by which people are critically aware of how and why their assumptions have come to constrain the way they understand their world; change their perspectives and take actions based on the new perspective. And the steps, according to Mezirow (p.161) are: (1) an empowered sense of self; (2) more critical understanding of how one’s social relationships and culture have shaped one’s beliefs, and (3) more functional strategies and resources for taking action.

**Phases of Learning Activity in Paradigm Shift and A Multi-dimensional Framework**

Since there is a distance between the process when people become critically aware of the problem in old norms and the process when they change worldview and take action based on a new paradigm, a four-step model—Demystification, Awareness, Vision and
Legitimation (DAVL)--is developed to describe the transformative learning process in a social paradigm shift. The process can be divided into two phases: the deconstructive and the reconstructive period.

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{Old Norm} & \text{New Norm} \\
\hline
\text{Deconstructive Phase} & \text{Reconstructive Phase} \\
1. Demystification & 3. Vision \\
2. Awareness & 4. Legitimation \\
\end{array}
\]

**Figure 3.1** Steps of transformative learning in response to paradigm shift (DAVL)

**Deconstructive Phase**

The deconstructive stage indicates that along with the crisis of the old paradigm, people become negative and critical of the old norms and depart from the tradition norm. The term “deconstruction” literally denotes the action of undoing the construction of a thing. In history the term is used to describe a philosophy and critical movement, started in the 1960s, that exposes all theoretical assumptions and internal contradictions in philosophical and literary language (Simpson & Weiner, 1989). In this study the term is used in the sense of questioning the assumptions underlying the old paradigm.

There are two steps in the deconstruction phase. Step 1, “demystification”, indicates that even though the predominant paradigm still works and is accepted widely, a problem or anomaly has already been detected by a small group of scholars or people. Sometimes their critique and suspicion of old norms may be regarded as something deviant, whereas it will be proved afterwards as a variation which may result in creating new norms.
Step 2, “Awareness” involves the crisis of the tradition and public criticism of the old paradigm. At this stage, more and more people come to know that the traditional paradigm needs to be updated and turn their eyes to a new direction. At the same time, elements related to alternative development are emerging, but a precise description is not possible due to its current unfolding.

Reconstruction phase

Reconstruction refers to the process of creating a new worldview, vision and strategy. “The decision to reject one paradigm is always simultaneously decision to accept another, and the judgement leading to that decision involves the comparison of both paradigms with nature and with each other” (Kuhn, 1962, p.77). When people are aware of a critique of their beliefs, an assessment of alternative perspectives, a decision to compare the old norm with new one, their reflection has moved towards the reconstructive period.

Crises are the necessary precondition for the emergence of new norms and we must ask next how people respond to their existence. In step 3, “vision” means the transformative learning moving to the period of searching for new direction. People are involved in an assessment of the emergent paradigm, a decision to take action based on the new understanding. Phase 4, “legitimation” shows the further development of new paradigm—the process of institutionalization engaged in strategy planning and policy making. The new development through legitimation is becoming a dominant paradigm.

In the DAVL model, from step 1 “demystification” to stage 2 “awareness” and the reconstructive period, the learning activity shows that the rise of deconstructive and reconstructive consciousness involves a social process of becoming public or widely
known. The model implies that parallel to the social paradigm shift, people perceive an enhanced level of awareness of the content of their beliefs, a critique of their assumptions and make a decision to negate an old perspective in favour of a new one, and take action based on the new perspective. This provides a multiple-dimensional view of the learning process which distinguishes it from the personal theories which just limit their perspectives to micro aspects of individual change.

How does the process of transformative learning start? The process, according to personal theory, is one of critical self-reflection kindled by an experience that is discrepant with individual experiences and values. Mezirow (1991, p.168) suggests the process of personal perspective transformation involves ten phases:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of epistemic, socio-cultural, or psychic assumptions
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and the others have negotiated a similar change.
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions
6. Planning of a course of action
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective.
In the process of the micro-level self-reflection or personal dimension of transformative learning, social actions and social changes as contingent triggers have showed little connection to the enhanced level of deconstructive and reconstructive consciousness raising. Factually, a large part of perspective transformations cannot be separated from social structural change and moreover they require paradigm shift as a precondition. This is not only because the learning process or the life of individuals is strongly influenced by the social forces, but also because the process of transformative learning itself involves a constant movement between action in social change and reflection on action. In Mao’s theory of self-reflection, the learning process cannot be separated from the social practice—the process of changing nature and society, and the knowledge change, or in its present day expressing-- transformation learning, often needs to be “repeated many times before errors in knowledge can be corrected … and consequently before the subjective can be transformed into the objective, or in other words, before the anticipated results can be achieved in practice” (Selected Works Vol.1,1965, p.306)

In contrast to the personal dimension of transformaitve learning, the DAVL framework provides a multi-dimensional picture of the learning process involving the dynamic interplay between changing actors and changing structure. Paradigm shift is the power agent of human activities and the actions occur in the context of given structures resulting in the dual quality of structures as both shaping and being shaped. This is the what Cunningham is searching, individuals are contextualized in the history, culture, and the social fabric of the society in which they live (1998).
Learning Activity in Defining Actors’ Performance in Paradigm Change

The steps in DAVL are not invariant stages of perspective transformation. Each step is fully contingent on the next and may or may not continue to develop to next stage. They can be understood, from the perspective of personal transformation, as the phases of meaning becoming clarified.

In all changes occurring in the society an important consideration is the awareness of paradigm change and the actor’s role by the people involved. The DAVL model can also be used to illustrate and define the different roles people play in response to paradigm shift through reaching the different stages in transformative learning. The following are the various types of role-players in social change:

- Conservationism describes an actor who attempts to strengthen the dominant paradigm, doing nothing with critical reflection or with the deconstructive stage.

- Reformism focuses on a pragmatic concern for effective management of old norms with a partial reflection or deconstructive consciousness, but at most it has done nothing beyond the suspicion.

- Nihilism, which is nourished by fatalism and derision, completes the deconstructive stages, but refuses to acknowledge and envision or project for the future. It stays away from reconstructive activity and treats the search for meaning as pointless.

- Transformism describes an actor whose aim is turning the page in order to contemplate new ways of thinking, being and doing. The actor completes both
deconstructive and reconstructive stages and gains a new understanding of self and society.

The different role-playing in the DAVL stages indicates not only the different action-orientation towards social change, but also, to some extent, a form of learning activity in developmental progress—a transition from awareness to social action with a new perspective. On the other hand, it should be taken into account that the roles an actor chooses may result from various elements, such as instrument or emancipatory knowledge interests, education and social-economic position.
CHAPTER 4

PARADIGM SHIFT AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING: FROM ELITE EDUCATION TO MASS EDUCATION IN CHINA

As in many industrial societies where there has been a paradigm shift from an elite to a mass higher education, access to higher education in China has also involved a series of debates: over the admission policy, how selection and equity interact and how access should be organized and financed (Williams, 1997, p.1). Although the current access movement is not the first to promote a mass system of higher education in this century (Central Institute for Educational Research, 1983), it has been the first to offer prospects of success—because the structure of the access as well as the whole educational system has changed fundamentally.

This chapter describes the paradigm change in access to higher education in late twentieth century China. First, the concept of accessibility and the conventional access to higher education in China are examined. Next, the crisis of the traditional access pattern and social awareness are discussed. Then, the holistic change in the deconstruction of the old paradigm is analyzed. The final discussion involves the new structural building—the emergent mass education and the challenges of the access movement.

From the viewpoint of transformation analysis, the Chinese educational transformation has been both personal and social. It is a holistic transition involving value, knowledge, strategy, policy, economy and culture. The debates and reflection on overcoming education for testing (where the teaching-learning activity centers around
passing the test)—a deconstructive orientation and on building competence education—a reconstructive orientation have been presented through the process of educational transformation.

Accessibility and Conventional Access to Higher Education in China

In considering the paradigm shift from elite education to mass education, accessibility as a major concern centering on equity, opportunity and participation should be further discussed. In sociological study, the emphasis is often on the differences in educational participation with various factors like gender, race, language and occupation. Sometimes equity of education opportunity is treated as the goal; at other times this is seen as a means to further purposes such as equity of employment choice. Economic research studies total enrollments due to the changes in tuition fees, student aid, family income and economic situation.

In Stager's study (1984), an inter-disciplinary framework about accessibility is presented. The central concern is who is eligible to access and the social-economic elements of the access process. The factors directly influencing accessibility of students are: (1) availability—academic record, external tests and other admission criteria; (1) eligibility—economic support, information, institutional policy and tuition; and motivation—prestige and personal satisfaction. Moreover, such factors as students' family background—parent's education and occupation and the school environment also have great impact on the students' motivation, eligibility and availability.
When people wish to access higher education, the door of the university should be always open. Bowles (Pike, 1970), a leading American writer on problems of university admission, stressed that every person should have an opportunity for education commensurate with his abilities and regarded the notion as one of the important topics associated with access to higher education.

In North America, government documents and educational institution policy normally give priority to the equal opportunity for all irrespective of their color, race, ethnicity, agenda, age, financial situation, physical and mental disabilities, distance and geography, etc. In a discussion paper from the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training (1996), accessibility is an essential objective in policy development. "It is important for all Ontarians to have, throughout their lives, opportunities to receive the education and training they need, both to develop their personal potential and to contribute the economic and social development of their communities". "No student who has the requisite capacity will be deprived of the opportunity to find a place in some program of study in some university in Ontario, but necessarily in the program or university of first choice" (Bovey, Mustard & Watts, 1984). An Issue Paper, circulated in Commission of Inquiry on Canadian University, posed the participation-related issues concerning those under-enrolled groups, such as the socio-economically disadvantaged whose education are deterred at a much earlier stage, women, disabled persons and native people (Smith, 1991).

As analyzed above, accessibility as a complex concept may associate many issues and can be approached from different perspectives. Admission standards and equity are one of the major areas of debate in access to higher education. Our discussion below
focuses on the wide debates over the accessibility of higher education in China: admission policy and the pattern of access, the problems of the traditional paradigm and the trends of higher education development. Before the discussion, a brief description of the current development of Chinese higher education is necessary.

In the late 20th century, the higher education system in China has experienced a continual growth and a multi-level educational structure with various educational delivery programs has been established (Liu, 1996). At the same time, the debates about the reform of higher education are also wider than before (Yang, 1998).

According to the Chinese education structure, there are basically two types of institutions for higher education: (1) general universities and colleges; and (2) adult universities and colleges (Yang, Lin & Su, 1988). The programs at university level are usually full-time.

The general universities and colleges, the so-called regular higher education, include those at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and two or three-year professional schools. Students are those in the 18-24 group. With respect to the first university degree study, the universities normally provide four years of schooling with the exception of some institutions like medical universities which require five or more years.

The adult universities and colleges involve Radio-TV universities, teachers’ continuing education and farmer’s universities. Students in adult university are usually over 25 years of age. In addition to the equivalent of four-year undergraduate programs and two or three-year professional programs, they also provide correspondence and continuing educational courses. For example, in 1995 there were 1,156 adult education
institutions offering the higher education programs, and at the same time over 800
general universities provided correspondence and continuing educational programs (Year

From the mid-20th century, and especially in the last two decades, the scale of
Chinese higher education has been considerably expanded. The number of general
universities, the so-called regular higher education institutions, increased from 207 in
1949 to 1,054 in 1995, a 5.1 fold increase. (State Statistical Bureau of China, 1996). In
1995, the enrollment in Chinese higher education reached 5.5 million, an increase of
738,400 than over 1990. In the period of 1990-1995, the annual growth rate of enrollment
of higher education was 7.99% (Year Book of Education in China, 1996).

However, such a steady growth still cannot meet the demands of many people who
desire to attend university. The low university participation rate, around 8 percent of
the 18-21 age group, caused growing dissatisfaction from government and public (State
Council, 1999).

It is commonly agreed that having the largest population in the world would be one
reason resulting in low university participation. China's population is over 1.2 billion. In
the 1990s, each year over 1.5 million young people, 18 years of age, will graduate from
secondary school, putting heavy pressure on the present institutions such as housing and
financing if only 1/3 of them--compared to the 34.8% university participation of
Ontario (Council of Ontario Universities, 1997) --want to enter universities. However,
scholars believe there is still plenty of room to make higher education more effective,
such as changing the admission policy, enrollment management and the traditional
pattern of the state monopoly. In recent years, the reform of the traditional access pattern in higher education has become a major subject of debate (Yang, 1998).

The traditional access pattern as a dominant route to university, or the so-called Chinese elite education, has three elements.

1. Uniform Entrance Exam and Quota-based enrollment.

In China accessing university education requires passing a nationwide entrance exam (Yang, Lin & Su, 1988). The features of the entrance exam are: (1) The score of standardized entrance examination is the arbiter of applicants’ qualifications. Grade point average (GPA) from school usually is not available; (2) The nationwide exam held once a year normally includes 4-5 tests taken over three days, such as mathematics, writing and literature, history, physics, foreign language; (3) To be enrolled in programs and universities is determined by the exam score (the overall number of enrollment is controlled annually by a national education plan). For instance, Beijing University, in the first rank of Chinese educational institutions, recruits students whose score is on the toplist. Every year there is a list of universities ranked by the student entrance exam score. The following is the top 10 Chinese Universities ranked by the entrance exam score of enrolled students in 1998.

Table 4.1

Top 10 Chinese Universities Ranked by Student Entrance Exam Score in 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Institution Name</th>
<th>Entrance Exam Score (using Tsinghua as the base)</th>
<th>Number of Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Tsinghua University</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>2191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Limited Access and Academic traditionalist Standard

The emphasis on the entrance exam as the symbol of academic merit is similar to the position of academic traditionalists, whose standard of accessibility is the students demonstrating their excellent learning capability. "The gold standard of A level points scores which symbolize and reinforce notions of academic merit and is presented as neutral, fair and a just selector of the suitable" (Williams, 1997). After entering the university, students normally can obtain their degree, because those who have passed the highly competitive selection—entrance exam are regarded as higher qualified degree candidates. And many potential candidates have experienced "access denied" due to their failure in the exam.

Partly due to the low university participation in China, 7.6 percent of 18-21 age group (State Statistical Bureau of China, 1996) in comparison to 34.8 percent of that in Ontario (Council of Ontario Universities, 1997), and partly due to the outmoded policy derived from a planned economy, a university student can get all-inclusive financial aid (tuition and living costs) from the state (Yang, Lin & Su, 1988). After graduation, a full time job will be provided, with the proviso that students can not choose jobs individually (Zhou, 1999).

Few people like to take more tests unless they have to. Therefore, it is normally difficult for the university itself to maintain a stringent requirement without social support. Seeing that passing the entrance exam offers very promising future: a university degree, a full time job and such opportunities as living in a city, and if a candidate fails in the exam, his/her future could be bleak, it no wonder that many people make considerable efforts to prepare for the exam. As a large educational population each year is drawn to take the entrance exam, the traditional access has caused an over-testing effect.

An article on test-taker attitudes reported: before taking the exam, some candidates showed confidence and eagerly competed in the exam; some felt nervous. “We think the present entrance exam should be modified in future. But as it stands, we have no alternative and have to do more homework to pass the exam.” (Yuan & Cao, 1999)
Crisis of the Traditional Access Model and Deconstructive Awareness

The elite educational paradigm, based on entrance exam, state monopolization and limited access, has dominated Chinese education for decades. Entering the 1990s, the traditional access provoked more and more criticism from various groups such as students, parents, teachers and administrators. The deconstructive awareness of the old norm is both personal and social. The focus is on over-testing, potential student rejection and the distortion of the aims of higher education.

The over-testing has an impact not only on post secondary education but also on secondary and elementary education (Yang, 1998), because a university candidate desiring to access higher education must first pass the high school and elementary school entrance exams. As the over-testing is widespread across all levels of education, students as well as parents have become more and more burdened and annoyed.

While the entrance competition was developing in basic education, parents showed more and more concern for their children’s development and health. In “Liberate Daughter From Study to the test” (He, 1999), a couple depicted an astonishing picture of their girl’s study. A 5th grade student usually studied from 7:10 am to 9:00 pm each day due to a lot of exercise and homework. If she encountered some hard problems, more often the study would continue till midnight. Among those questions arising from the assignments, half of them baffled the parents with MA degree. They had to call on experts. Sometimes an 11th grade arithmetic quiz was presented in the 4th grade exercise. Literature reading, supposed to be most interesting now, has become mechanical work. Every essay should be analyzed by a stereotyped trilogy: rhetoric, grammar and
paragraph structure. As a result of doing those mountains of the homework, the girl looked as if she were an old woman and almost lost her interest in learning (He, 1999).

Convinced that school had to do little with the improvement, the parents decided to conduct some liberal education by themselves for their girl. Instead of driving the child to get high scores, they took their daughter travelling and playing sports, encouraged her to read for pleasure and write freely from her own heart. Finally, the girl rediscovered her enjoyment in study (He, 1999).

Since all the financial sources and administration in higher education are monopolized by the state, the limited access results in relatively lower university enrollment. Seeing that many academically good potential candidates have been rejected by the highly competitive entrance exam each year, scholars argued that the enrollment should be expanded. A Director of the Education Department said, based on the present low ratio of student/faculty, they can increase the enrollment by 200% immediately, if only there were more room to house new students (Wang, 1999).

Recent studies have shown that there is a dilemma in Chinese higher education development: on the one side, the university participation in China is not only lower than that in advanced countries, but also lower than those in fast growing economies partly due to insufficient investment in higher education; on the other, with the high expectation of education and family economic support, many people with dreams to complete their university study can not find any alternatives to accessing higher education (Hu, 1999). The criticism of the over-testing leads to wide debates on what the education is for: teaching to the test or to the student competence (Chiao, 1999)? While educators were appealing for the emancipation of students from those heavy tests, a young teacher took
action. He brought interesting stories and practical knowledge into his history course and hoped to create a liberal education in classroom. Students liked it and said they had never heard such an interesting course before. Unfortunately, at the end of the term, the average score of test in his class was 10 points below the other classes. Some practical advice from the president and senior teachers was given to the novice: a good story sounds interesting but is no use in testing. The young teacher had to return to the convention: underline some key points in textbook and require students to repeat them from memory. He hated it but felt powerless (Chiao, 1999).

Those criticisms above are a clear symptom of educational transformation: the traditional paradigm has no longer worked well and alternative development is in strong demand. However, the effort of the young teacher who has completed a personal transformation—shifting away from teaching to the test—has proved to be a failure (Chiao, 1999). This reveals that the existence of the tradition paradigm, including entrance exam, over-testing and teaching to the test, involves many interrelated social components and subsystems like values, norms, culture and economy. To change the traditional pattern needs not only individual perspective change but also holistic social change.

**Paradigm Deconstruction: Factor Analyzed in the Holistic Shift**

Historically discussions about changing of the traditional paradigm can be traced back to the mid-1980s. At that time policy analysis of the problems of old system and the structural change in higher education was offered, such as reform of entrance admission, enrollment expansion and development of higher education in various forms including the private system (Tao, 1985). But the suggestions had been given little attention in the
1980s. Why has the traditional access and entrance exam, which had been regarded previously as a norm, provoked increasing criticism since the mid-1990s? In addition to the change of the people's ideas on higher education, the main reason is that the external and internal environment of higher education such as value, knowledge, policy and economy have structurally changed.

Perhaps the significant change outside the education system is the shift from a planned economy to a market economy. As many people may know, China has come to the marketplace and developed rapidly in the last two decades. Graph 1 below shows the growth of annual income per person from 1985 to 1995. For the years of 1985-1990, the annual income doubled. And a triple increase can thereafter be found in the next five years (1990-1995).

![Graph 4.1](image)

**Figure 4.1** Annual Income Per Capita in China, 1985-95 RMB/Yuan


The rapidly growing economy has had a great influence on the development of higher education as well as the aspect of accessibility. First, the ongoing changes in the
global economy and the much-talked-of knowledge society have produced a circumstance where knowledge and skills are increasingly valuable. In a knowledge age, people, whether employer or employee, need more educational resources to maintain and upgrade their skills, because new information and skills not labor or raw capital is the key resource (Drucker, 1994). In examining the constant growth of Canadian graduate programs, Quazi and Stokes (1997) pointed out that the growth in graduate level study may be consistent with the demands of a knowledge-based, technology-centered, intensely competitive global society.

Second, the relationship between education and job market in global market is becoming more versatile than that in a planned economy (Zhao, et al. 1999). After two decades of the open door policy, today's China is a typical market place. Although there is still a government role in the job market, people could find more opportunities by job-searching. However, at the time when students have more choices, the benefits such as all-inclusive financial aid and promise of employment have been cut (Department of Foreign Affairs of Ministry of Education, 1995). Students must pay more tuition than before and study in university is more and more becoming a private investment.

Economic development also enables people's dream of accessing higher education to come true. According to Chinese tradition, parents usually have great expectations for their children's university education. Surveys show that educational investment is the second largest expenditure in family, and 89% parents want their children to get university education or above (Shanghai Institute of Education Research, 1999).

Finally, with the shift towards market economy the private sector is gradually playing an active role in China. Graph 2 shows that private capital attained its full speed
of development during 1990s. The total capital in 1996 reached 375 millions, which is approximately forty times of that in 1990. At the same time, the patterns of institution funded by private resources have been explored (Sun, 1999).

![Graph showing private capital development speed in China, RMB/Yuan: Millions](image)

**Figure 4.2** Private Capital Development Speed in China, RMB/Yuan: Millions


There are also some major changes inside the educational system such as the shift from the education for testing to the competence education. As an instance of the English teaching and learning, the traditional English teaching driven by the entrance exams gives priority to the test. Students complain that they have to burden their memory with what the test requests, although they knew it was completely ridiculous. Many students have learned English over a decade but still cannot speak it. A student who had passed the English Proficiency Test reported ironically that when he devoted much time to and felt good at those test trivialities, he also was used to the awkward dumb English which has little to do with speaking and communication but is used for reading. (Duan, 1999).
Presently the emphasis in learning English has gradually turned to improvement of communication skills: listening and speaking. How to get a working knowledge of English, a capability of speaking and communication, has become a much-discussed subject in language teaching. In June of 1999, my article introducing a Canadian ESL program was published in China Youth Daily (Miao, 1999).

The paradigm of accessing higher education in developed nations also provides an alternative vision. While more and more Chinese scholars and students have studied abroad and observed access to high education without entrance exams, the different access patterns in Western countries lead people to reflect on the traditional Chinese entrance requirement. In this respect, the route to higher education in Canada provides a good example. Most Canadian schools and universities require GPA for entrance requirement. There are normally no entrance examinations with a few exceptions of some law, medical, pharmacy and business programs. In addition, applicants’ working experience, professional achievement, reference letters and resume are also taken into account.

The analysis above clearly shows that many factors come into play in the process of the holistic change and the interaction between personal transformation and social structural change.

Reconstruction: Emergent Paradigm and Challenges

In early 21st century China, the shift towards mass education has brought about some notable changes in higher education, ranging from admission policy, enrollment
expansion, exploration of private higher education and the strategic goal setting. Those tendencies signal the emergency of the new paradigm in higher education, even though the traditional pattern remains influential.

In the process of paradigm reconstruction, the admission standard, and especially the entrance requirement, is becoming more flexible than before. It has been reported that the number of tests in the uniform entrance exam has been reduced (Dong, 1999). At the same time, Chinese universities will be able to set their own exams, and students will be allowed to choose more of the exams they sit. As well, the nationwide entrance exam, which was taken once a year, is now being held twice or more. It is believed this step can provide more opportunities for students to pass the entrance exam (State Council, 1999).

As the consequence of changing admission policy, in 1999 Chinese university enrollment had an increase of 44%, to 2.7 million from 1.8 million last year, which is the largest enrollment expansion since 1950 (Fei & Wen, 1999). In addition, the wider admission for graduate study and the development of adult education has been discussed (Li, 1999). A report from the central government claimed that by 2010, the rate of university participation in China should reach 15% of the 18-21 age group as compared with 9% in 1999 (State Council, 1999).

At the time when the entrance to university has become wider, the competition among the universities in China is increasing. It was reported during the enrollment expansion in 1999 that the enrollment plan of some universities failed to attract prospective students, because their programs did not fit the students' need (Liu & Wen, 1999). In view of this situation, effective enrollment management is an important task which should be improved in the future.
While Chinese higher education has shifted to emphasize access and equity, there are growing concerns about the academic quality. A report from the Ministry of Education (1999) stressed the improvement of educational quality. This reflects that while the access pattern is moving away from heavy reliance on entrance exams, how to keep the quality of students is being debated. However, studies have showed that the entrance exam may not adequately predict students’ future success (Ahmadi, et al., 1997). On the other hand, the change of admission requirement does not mean access to higher education without any assessment and criteria. The Canadian access model shows incorporating such requirements as GPA, writing samples and personal interviews would allow schools to admit more qualified students into higher education.

Another important step to improve the quality of higher education is the “211 project” sponsored by the Chinese government. In February of 1993, the Guideline for the Reform and Development of Education in China was jointly promulgated by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council (Department of Foreign Affairs of Ministry of Education China, 1995). The strategic goals set for the quality of higher education in the 1990s are: (1) the skilled personnel trained by higher educational institutions should meet the needs of economic and social development as well as the needs of technical development; (2) resources should be mustered to facilitate 100 key universities and strengthen some designated priority fields or disciplines to reach the national advanced level; some of them can reach the world’s advanced level in the early 21st century (Department of Foreign Affairs of Ministry of Education China, 1995). The “211 Project” has raised the hope that Chinese higher education will develop substantially and keep improving its quality.
In examining the development of higher education world-wide over the last few decades, we may find two alternative discourses—one to improve quality and the other to improve equity (Berdahl, Moodie & Spitzberg, 1991, p.54). How can the balance be kept between the quality and equity? The question necessitates other prior inquiries such as what is the quality, what is the aim of higher education, and if competence education, as opposed to the education for tests, should emphasize people's problem-solving, self-realization, and creative thinking. It is in the process of the argument and reflection that the education paradigm and people's perspectives of education have gradually been transformed.
MAKING HISTORY: PERSPECTIVE TRANSFORMATION
AND SOCIAL ACTION

Consciousness Raising in Social Context

As has been showed in chapter 3, the DAVL model provides a picture of social
dimension of tranformative learning: people engaged in transformative learning, the so-called actors, play a dual role as both shaping and being shaped. On the one hand, people
perceive an enhanced level of critique of their assumptions and negative of the old
paradigm; on the other they take action, based on the new perspective, to construct the
new paradigm. The learning process from deconstruction and reconstruction in the
DAVL pattern can be analyzed from the two interrelated levels: consciousness raising
and involvement.

When personal and social transformation interact, the power of the learning group,
the community and social movement, of which adult educators are often a part, is
significant to lead individuals to critical reflection.

Eighty years ago, Lindeman, an influential leader among those who established
adult education, defined his ideal of adult education as: "a cooperative venture in non-
authoritarian, informal learning, the chief purpose of which is to discover the meaning of
experience: a quest of the mind which digs down to the roots of the preconceptions
which formulate our conduct; a technique of learning for adults which makes education
coterminous with life and hence elevates living itself to the level of adventurous
experiment” (Brookfield, 1987). The emphasis on discussion and discourse as a co-operative venture has remained a tradition in adult education from that time.

In group discourse, learners can question each other and challenge each other’s assumptions and perspectives. “The kinds of questions that stimulate content, process and premise reflections can be encouraged” (Cranton, 1998). In a study of consciousness raising in the women’s movement, Hart (1990) listed the significant elements of awareness as “acknowledgement and analysis of oppression, acceptance of the importance of personal experience as the original content for critical reflection, planned homogeneity of the learning group and direct reflection for the critique of the mechanisms of power in a structure of equality among all the participant of these groups”.

Social movement can significantly facilitate critical self-reflection and the movement in turn can gain great power when people identify themselves as part of their perspective transformation. The social movements such as the Antigonish movement in Canada and the current movement towards access to higher education in China have proved that they provide influential reinforcement of a new way to see people’s lives.

**Involvement and Action**

Consciousness raising in learning groups and social movements, as discussed above, is involved in the dynamic interplay between the changing actor and changing structure. It is also an involvement and action, because the primary role of the actor is to shape the world. Accordingly, the learning process in the DAVL model which integrates the agency
framework can be expressed in multi-dimensional views for deep understanding: how are people’s ideas shaping and being shaped by social change? How do people accept a new theory and participate in a social movement? How do people make their own history? Those questions reflect the same process of transformative learning and the DAVL pattern explains not only the micro aspects of human action, but also the macro aspects of actor’s role-play in social structural change.

Transformative learning is the process of generating knowledge for the purpose of addressing social problems. In fulfilling its goals of self-reflection and social change, transformation theory gives priority to praxis and this is the common value shared with most social emancipatory theories. One of the Mao’s important philosophic works, addressing critical reflection, was named *On Practice*. He argued, “reading is learning, but applying (i.e. theory in action) is also learning and the more important kind of learning. … doing is itself learning” (Selected Works Vol.1,1965, p.190). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire pointed out that reflection and action become imperative when one dose not erroneously attempt to dichotomize the content of humanity from its historical forms. Critical and liberal dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever the stage of their struggle for liberation (1970, p.52).

Parallel to the process by which the learning activity moves from awareness to action, or in the DAVL process from deconstruction to reconstruction, the changing paradigm clearly reflects how people accept new norms and make their own history. The current educational transformation in China has presented a good example of how crisis in the traditional access pattern has provoked people’s critical reflection, and in turn they gain great power to promote the access movement towards mass education when
identifying themselves as part of perspective transformation. The change of the educational structure is the product of human activities—transformative leaning activities. This is how transformative learning can make history.

**Fostering Transformative Learning and a Dilemma**

Where can social transformation be learned? One way, the traditional setting, is through non-formal education, in community development and action groups that utilize praxis or an action-reflection model. Skillful pedagogy includes dialogue on the fundamental premises which have formed worldviews. Is it possible for transformation to be accomplished in formal classroom education? Scott asks (1998). The answer is positive.

For example, in the course of "Introduction to Transformative Learning Studies" (Sullivan, 1998) adult learners actively participated in transformative criticism—a deep cultural and personal reflection on the social and ecological crisis caused by globalization, and raised their consciousness of communion, bio-centric and integral development through discussing and sharing. The classroom discussion on the shift from globalization and transformative education vision towards the 21st century shows that the learning activity is effective through teaching-learning transactions where critical thinking is encouraged.

Since transformative learning is an action-oriented approach, in addition to the classroom discussion, the social practice—the action of moving back and forth between action in changing the society and reflection on the action—is indispensable for the
growing depth of understanding. Perhaps a combination of classroom discussion and social practice is preferable.

Most scholars agree that the central responsibility of adult educators is to help adult learners become more critically reflective and participate more fully in action. A collateral responsibility is to create communities of discourse with norms that are consistent with the ideal condition of learning. Mezirow (1991, p.198) lists the ideal conditions for fostering adult learning. "Ideal" is used not as an unattainable goal of perfection but as a judgment of better value. Participants in discourse:

- Have accurate and complete information;
- Are free from coercion and self-deception;
- Have the ability to weigh evidence and evaluate arguments;
- Have the ability to be critically reflective;
- Are open to alternative perspectives;
- Have equality of opportunity to participate; and
- Will accept an informed, objective, and rational consensus as a legitimate test of validity.

Such participation, according to Mezirow (p.199), implies a reasonable minimal level of safety, mental and physical health, shelter, and employment opportunity, as well as acceptance of others with different perspectives and social cooperation.

To facilitate adult transformative learning in the context of paradigm shift, the educator's role is a complex and sometimes a sensitive one. This is not only because the process of changing a system, involving social and collective action, would be long and
difficult, but also because the consequence of some social changes is not easy to anticipate from the beginning.

While participating in a social change, an important concern is the awareness of change by the people involved, especially the awareness of the consequences the processes bring about. Generally there are three types of changes: (1) the process may be recognized, anticipated and intended. For example, the current movement of feminist and environmental education in Canada and the educational paradigm shift in China; (2) the process may be unrecognized, unanticipated and unintended. In this case, the change itself and its outcome appear as surprising. As an instance, for a long time the public was unaware of the environmental degradation produced by industrialization; (3) the third type is something in between. In some circumstances, people may recognize the process and anticipate its course at the beginning but may be proved entirely wrong afterwards. The Cultural Revolution in the 1970s in China is such a case. It was welcomed by the public at the start and aroused the opposition of the entire people at the end. In some circumstances, the process runs largely against what was initially intended and raises wide debates. Consider the case of ongoing globalization.

Briefly speaking, the agenda of globalization is the romanticization of the unrestricted market-place, the privilege of the private and corporate system over the public system and this dismantling of the Welfare State. There is hope that “the globalization of market capitalism will solve all economic and social problems”. (Korten, 1996, p.183) As a result of making enormous profits, social and environmental needs have been ignored.
Nowadays more and more people have realized that things are not as good as those globalists expected. Unemployment and poverty still remain and social programs are being downsized. Globalization is seeking a solution for the problems of the Welfare State, but the effort obviously goes in the wrong direction: “global economy serves the few at the expense of the many” (Bouchard, 1998).

In view of those unanticipated and unintended situation, some questions are raised: do adult educators intentionally stimulate transformative learning without learners fully understanding that such a transformation may result? Do educators decide which beliefs of learners should be questioned? From the perspective of Cranton (1998), in terms of the self-awareness of our practice, making our own assumptions explicit and continually questioning and revising our theory of practice are the crucial educator’s role. It is not a matter of choosing the right method or stance, but rather a matter of ceaseless, critical self-reflection.
CHAPTER 6

MAKING HISTORY: VISION CREATING, CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY AND REFLECTION

Educator’s Role and Actor’s Role

Since the goal of transformative learning is to help learners become more critically reflective and participatively in action, this raises the question of what is the relationship among the learning activity, the educator’s role and action. According to Chinese philosophy, a person’s knowledge, reflective thinking, and value are interrelated and inseparable. A philosopher’s theory requires that the persons live it; the persons themselves is their vehicle. Philosophy is not simply something to be known, but is something to be experienced (Feng, 1976, p.10). Therefore, to be an educator desiring to develop others, one should develop oneself. It is significant for an educator to have experience as a learner in the adaptation of social transformation and to carry a transformative vision in the actor’s role.

As has been shown in previous sections, social structure has a powerful influence on actors during a paradigm shift. Actors, as being shaped and shaping, first should adapt themselves to the changing process, learning something new, and then actively shape the structure. Similarly, during the social transformation it is often the case that adult educators are required to shift their role or to be a learner first. For example, with the development of new technology, educators may become guides and facilitators; within the renewed educational philosophy, educators must shift their focus from teaching content to responding to the individual’s learning process. Emphasis will be placed on
participation, responsibility and autonomy, including respect for the learner's preferred ways of learning (Morin, 1998, p.69).

In adaptation to a social structural change, the effective way for an educator to act is to be a learner first and then a teacher. This idea is not new or exclusive to the current pedagogy. If one wants to be the masses’s teacher, one first ought to be masses’s student, as Mao put it (Selected Works Vol.3, 1965, p.158). In a liberating education, teachers become learners as well as educators (Friere, 1970, p.67).

Transformative learning, as the process of taking action to implement new understanding derived from critical reflection, gives priority to praxis. In the process of self-reflection and action, not only learners but also educators will face choices as the role-player in response to social change: conservatism, reformism, nihilism and transformism. The position is that educators cannot possibly teach people in favour of the new paradigm if they are not transformist. To be a transformist, it is vitally important for the educator, whether as participator or pioneer, to be aware of the vision and clarify future development in social action and movement.

Vision Creating

Vision is a concept that refers to one’s mental image of the future. It tells where individuals or groups should be going so that all people’s efforts can be pointed to the destination. For educators who wish to facilitate transformative learning, the need for vision is obvious. Identifying vision can provide an inspiring picture of a different future and give people a great incentive to take action. As Nanus (1992) describes, a vision is
only an idea or an image of a more desirable future for the organization, but the right vision is an idea so energizing that it in effect jump-starts the future by calling forth the skills, talents, and resources to make it happen. In the process of transformative learning, educators need to develop vision in the reconstructive period. For example, in *Transformative Learning: Educational Vision for the 21st Century* (Sullivan, 1999), the author invites readers to enter into a deep cultural and personal reflection on the current problems of education and encourages people to make their educated guess about where the present state of affairs is leading. On the other hand, the planetary consciousness, which stresses the oneness of humanity and nature as opposed to globalization consciousness, is developed as the vision for the alternative development in the future.

What about fostering transformative learning without vision? To follow a well-established direction may be viewed as a kind of management without vision. Keller (1995) argued that not having a vision is also a kind of vision—to imagine that the organization will remain pretty much the same in the future in the face of environmental changes. The static view of the future, nonetheless, is a feature of conservatism not transformism.

Transformative vision as an achievable goal is different from those unrealistic dreams. It should take the clarity of purpose and specification of action steps into consideration. Therefore, transformative vision must provide a strong link between the present goals and future possibilities. As an instance of educational transformation occurring in China, parallel to the changing of people's ideas and ideology about higher education, the access movement towards mass education is influenced by a variety of external and internal forces, ranging from the development of the market economy and
the job market and the growth of private education, to the change in admission policy, enrollment management and cultural exchange as well as the financial resource allocation.

The geographical diffusion of the concept of environmental education is another good example, illustrating the link between vision and realistic development. A study (Wheeler, 1985) found that nobody prior to 1965 had put together the words “environment” and “education” to make the compound noun we use today. A survey of the literature reveals that the words “environment education” were first used in the proceedings of the 1965 Keele Conference on Education. And then the term was presented at the 1965 conference of the International Union of the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), and the 1968 Bangkok Conference. Soon after that the new concept diffused quickly throughout the world.

Interestingly enough, although environmental education as a complex idea—in a sense we use it today—was proposed in the 1960s, its earliest recorded appearance was in a book about city life: “Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life”, written by the American brothers Paul and Percival Goodman (1947). The term was no longer used in Goodmans' writing, but 18 years later with the re-invention of the concept in the 1965 Keele Conference, the term became widespread.

This case raises an interesting question: why did the first incidence of the term in Goodmans' book have little influence on the environmental studies and activities, and why was it not until 18 years later that its re-invention in a conference led to widespread usage in the world? It is clear not that the term itself has some glamour but the context of social-economic development and people's attitudes towards the environment have
changed greatly. Wheeler's study (1985) indicated the main strands leading to the spread of environmental education in the 1950-60s: (1) an increasing use of outdoor education and environmental studies by schools and youth groups in Europe and North America; (2) an international attempt to promote "conservation education" carried out by IUCN through its workshop meetings held in various parts of the world, and the wide distribution of the Commissions influential newsletters; (3) a widening concern about the threats to the survival of wildlife and the pollution of the natural environment by man-made products, and the increasing environmental action. Perhaps it is mankind's growing awareness of the threat he poses to the sustainability of the biosphere that gives environmental education, the vision of educational development, the fundamental impetus and importance.

There are many ways to develop the vision and each may be associated with a specific situation. People can look back in time as they do with reflection and re-evaluate, or look forward to conceive of new direction and structure. Sometimes development of vision for organizations is based on a shared belief, therefore clarifying the core value would be one of the key steps.

Cross-cultural study is an important dimension of the development of vision. By comparing those similarities and differences among cultures, cross-cultural study can not only provide us with rich information of cultural diversity, but also suggest frameworks and ideas of development which may produce a vision and give an impetus to social transformation.

While the relationship between human beings and the planetary system is under examination, a universe of unending variety is revealed, and moreover, at the group level,
cultural diversity as differentiation in the universe is prominent. Cultural identity can be viewed in many aspects: different physical appearances, behaviors, institutions and religions. From the cosmological perspective, each culture can be understood as a unique expression of the universe unfolding (Sullivan, 1999, p.247)

Culture is an open and changing system. Each culture is destined to express its particular identity. On the other hand, cultural communication, via subjectivity, is involved. For those modern cultures, their fulfillment has largely been made in relatedness: the reciprocal dependence on each other. Generally speaking, where there is cultural communication, there is cultural comparison.

In the course of cultural communication, those similarities and differences among cultures are compared and studied, and new information of social change would be presented. More often, when people experience something in other cultures holding different perspectives, they may become critical of their previous paradigms and exploratory of new developments. In this sense, the interaction between cultural diversity and communication is a dynamic of social changes.

Transformative Learning: Keeping Reflection or Pursuing Everlast?

It is commonly acknowledged that society, at all levels of its complexity, is incessantly changing. The change at the macro level is involved in economy, polity and culture; at the micro level in individual actions or interactions. The development of an objective process (social change) is full of contradictions and struggle, and so is the development of human knowledge (personal change) (Mao, Selected Works, Vol.1. 1965, p.307). The
constant change in the personal, in the expression of Mezirow (1991, p.167), is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why people's assumptions have come to constrain the way they understand their world; changing their perspectives and taking actions based upon these new understanding.

In the reconstructive period of the DAVL, when learning activity moves from the "vision" to the "legitimation" stage, the new paradigm becomes dominant. At the same time, the demystification of the dominant paradigm may start again and with the new cycle the content of perspective transformation rises to a higher level, as does the social transformation. This is, at the individual level, another dimensional view of adult development in the transformative learning process. From the viewpoint of actor's roleplay, the new cycle is the human action in making history.

With the DAVL framework of transformative learning and a cross-cultural dialogue on critical reflection, the present discussion of the transformative learning gives us a deeper understanding of the learning process. In addition to the systematic study for transformative learning from the 1980s, there are some cultural traditions, including theories from the West and East, directly or indirectly contributing to transformation theory. Social transformation and integral development as subjects are both highlighted by Canadian and Chinese scholars. There is no doubt that transformative learning as higher order thinking connected with "Tao" has a strong potential for vivid dialogue between the Canadian and Chinese tradition.

There are some questions still remaining that, if researched further, would strengthen our awareness of transformative learning. Examples are: Is there a shift in direction for what counts as knowledge? Is the aim grounded in a future vision that
includes freedom and social emancipation? What is the influence of social position and value on the process of perspective transformation? In the area of comparative study, the language, for example in English and Chinese, is different. What role does language play in dialogue in the comparative study of transformative learning? How can we interpret the ideas and frameworks concerning transformation theory in the multicultural context? When western scholars address critical self-reflection as the central role of personal and social transformation, and when ancient Chinese philosophy says the man who keeps danger in mind is the one who survives and knowing the harmony and everlasting is to be illumined, do they point to the same thing? Or are they the different approaches of higher order thinking which would be mutually complementary?

As the process of transformative learning varies from individual to individual, are there some different types and learning styles among cultures? Nevertheless, the growing interests in cross-cultural dialogue of this area— the present study is an example—shows the increasing cultural exchange and communication between Canada and China.
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