

“A qualitative investigation into Chinese doctoral students’ cross-cultural adaptation in Australian universities”

By

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo.

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List of Abbreviations

CDS	Chinese doctoral students
CCA	cross-cultural adaptation
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Math
ICC	intercultural communication competence
“ABC” model	affective, behavioural, and cognitive model
PPCT	Process-Person-Context-Time
CIT	critical incident techniques

ABSTRACT

Due to the globalisation of higher education, the number of Chinese students who are preparing for and eager to study abroad has been increasing. There remains, however, a dearth of research into the experience of Chinese doctoral students abroad, as most studies either concentrate on coursework students or treat Chinese students as part of a homogeneous group under the umbrella term of international students. Grounded in Australia, one of the top three leading destinations for Chinese students, this study seeks to understand how Chinese doctoral students perceive their lived experience of adapting to the academic and research environment in Australian universities.

This study constellates an innovative data collection, constituting techniques of interview, critical incident, and visual graphic. Heeding to a self-formation paradigm that challenges a misinterpreted and pathologised stereotype, this study probes into Chinese doctoral students' emic perception of their cross-cultural adaptation from a human development perspective. Investigation develops around three phrases, focusing respectively on how motivated and prepared they were for the overseas study (planning phase investigation), how they experience their adaptation as active agents (implementing phase investigation), and how they evaluate their overseas doctoral journey (reflecting phase investigation).

The thesis makes theoretical, empirical and methodological contribution to the study of overseas doctoral students' cross-cultural adaptation. Organising its analysis through a synergistic framework of three-phrase cultural adaptation, it articulates and synthesises research ideas pertaining to adaptation within a spatial-temporal continuum that conflates pertinent theories into a new analytic lens. Empirically, findings from the research contribute to various stakeholders in terms of bolstering the effectiveness of cross-cultural adaptation and that of the internationalisation of doctoral education. Methodologically, a combination of popular techniques and underused instruments such as graphics and maps draws on merits of each technique to disclose a full picture of the issue concerned in an in-depth manner.

The thesis will be most valuable to researchers in cultural studies and practitioners in international education, or in a broader sense anyone who has a keen interest in knowing how individuals navigate a learning trajectory and construe meanings in unfamiliar academic and socio-cultural settings, not least Chinese PhDs studying in Western countries.