

A cross-cultural psychologist considers Chinese higher education: Questions worth asking?

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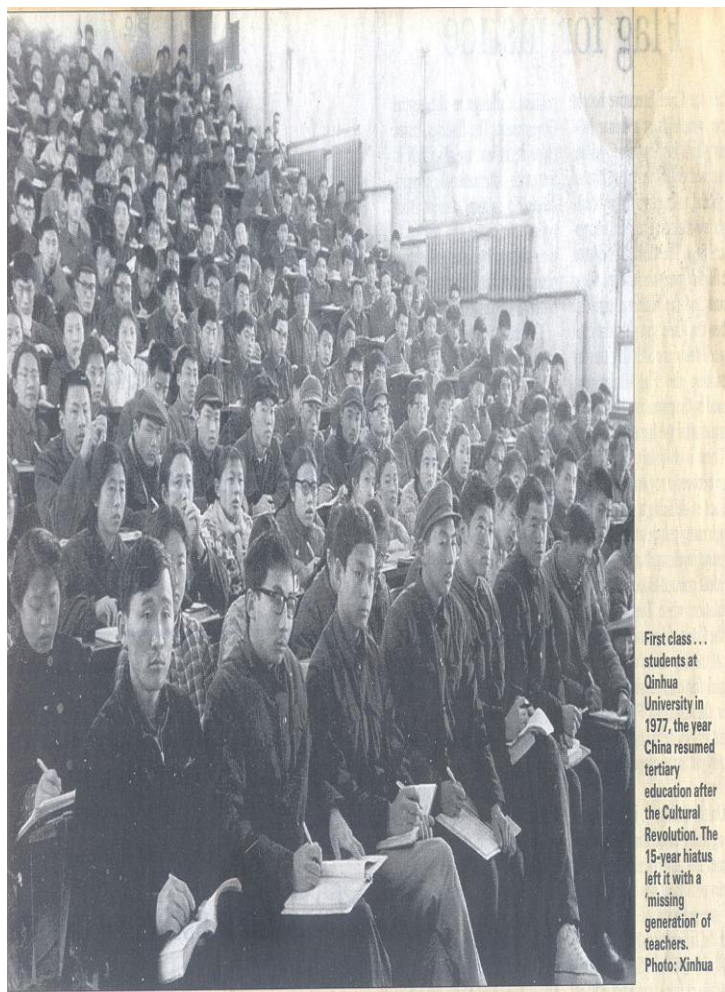
**Keynote presentation to the conference:
A Cultural Reflection on the Transformation of
Teaching to Learning in Higher Education
held at the Macau University of Science and Technology,
March 20-21, 2015**

Appreciations...

- “when drinking water from a stream, remember its source”
- Professor Jianrong Sun
- thorough, responsive, and considerate organization
- let’s learn from the masters of practice!
- ...including my gifted teachers and long-suffering students...



The core topics of this forum...



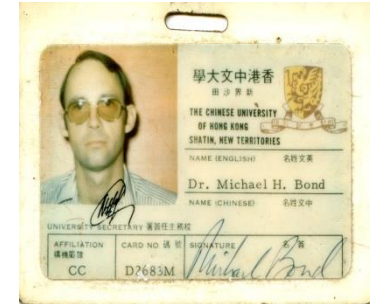
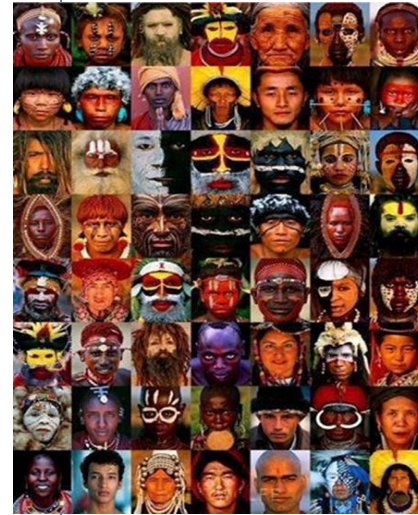
1. Impact of **culture** on educational behaviors and perceptions
2. Outcome-based assessment and the transformation from teaching to learning
3. Impact of **culture** on learning-centeredness
4. Impact of **culture** on faculty development

Note centrality of the **culture concept** especially central for transforming any societal process so fundamental as educating the human capital in a nation

My bottom lines as a social scientist

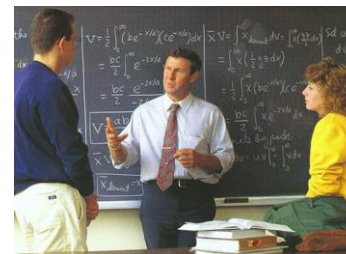
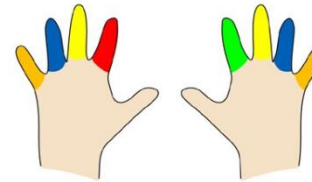
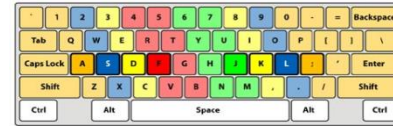
- after spending 45 years of teaching and learning in other cultural systems, **culture rules!**
- “if it can’t be measured, then it can’t be managed” – modern management mantra
- use the past [results] to prepare for a better future
- that “better” future may be **culturally variable**
- “culture” for my talk = **national culture**

Questions are useful teaching tools for provoking discovery!



Forum theme: A culturedu transformation for learning centrality in Chinese higher education

- “culturedu”?
- do educational contexts, local and national, constitute a **culture** within which they function - constraints and affordances which restrain and promote the mastering of skills necessary for social living, personal and national development?
- how does the **cultural context** impact on these teacher-student moments in higher education?



Premises about the teacher-student dyad in any culture

- teaching and learning are fundamental and necessary exchanges throughout our lifespan and in any social unit where skills need to be transmitted across generations and skill levels
- 玉不琢不成器，人不学不知理 (If you don't first polish the jade, you can make nothing of it. If people do not pursue their studies, they cannot know what is morally right.) *Book of Rites*, Han Dynasty
- These exchanges happen within a social context in a variety of physical and social settings
- Different cultural logics about the t-s relationship affect **what is transmitted** and **how**



Drawing comprehensive distinctions among a wide range of national cultures?

- 先入為主 《漢書》 班固 (First to enter is the master)
Book of Han, Pan Ku (A.D. 32-92)
- enter the Master – Geert Hofstede, the Dutch Mercator of culture
- over the last 40 years Hofstede has developed a taxonomy of 6 dimensions to distinguish national cultures in terms of their **values**
 - **values = what things people strive to attain**



The 6 dimensions (from Hofstede, 2015)

1. *Individualism as a characteristic of a culture opposes Collectivism* (the word is used here in an anthropological, not a political sense). Individualism stands for a society in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him- or herself and his or her immediate family only. Collectivism stands for a society in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lives continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. The major threat to in-groups comes from other in-groups that are seen and treated as out-groups.

2. *Power Distance (from large to small)* as a characteristic of a culture defines the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a society expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. ("All societies are unequal, but some are more unequal than others" - Hofstede, 1980: 136).

The 6 dimensions

3. *Uncertainty Avoidance* (from *strong* to *weak*) as a characteristic of a culture defines the extent to which the members of a society feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations, trying to avoid whatever they perceive as unstructured, unclear, or unpredictable by maintaining strict codes of behavior and a belief in absolute truths. In cultures with a strong uncertainty avoidance aggressive, emotional, compulsive, and intolerant behavior is accepted; cultures with a weak uncertainty avoidance seek for relaxation, contemplation and tolerance.

4. *Masculinity as a characteristic of a culture opposes Femininity*. Masculinity stands for a society in which emotional gender roles are clearly distinct: men are supposed to be assertive, tough and focused on material success: women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. Femininity stands for a society in which emotional gender roles overlap: both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life.

The 6 dimensions

5. *Long Term Orientation as a characteristic of a culture opposes Short Term Orientation*. Long term orientation stands for the fostering in society of pragmatic virtues oriented towards future rewards, in particular perseverance, thrift, and adapting to changing circumstances. Short term orientation stands for the fostering in society of virtues related to the past and present, such as national pride, respect for tradition, preservation of *face*, and fulfilling social obligations.

6. *Indulgence as a characteristic of a culture opposes Restraint*. Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by strict social norms.

Metricizing values to codify cultures

Scores on the six dimensions for ten countries ranked by 2012 per capita national wealth

	Country*	USA	Swe	Ger	Fra	Jpn	Ven	Chi	Mor	Ido	Nig
1	Individualism (100) vs. Collectivism (0)	91	71	67	71	46	12	20	46	14	20
2	Large (100) vs. Small (0) Power Distance	40	31	35	68	54	81	80	70	78	77
3	Strong (100) vs. Weak(0) Uncertainty Avoidance	46	29	65	86	92	76	30	68	48	54
4	Masculinity (100) vs. Femininity (0)	62	5	66	43	95	73	66	53	46	45
5	Long Term (100) vs. Short Term (0) Orientation	26	53	83	63	88	16	87	14	62	13
6	Indulgence (100) vs. Restraint (0)	68	78	40	48	42	100	24	25	38	84

* Abbreviations for: Sweden, Germany, France, Japan, Venezuela, China, Morocco, Indonesia, Nigeria
The scores for Nigeria on dimension 1-4 are based on West African regional data

China in this “value mapping”?

- we are familiar with China's location geographically
- even demographically, here in terms of population density
- but, valuationally?
- are there “Western” value groupings and are they opposite to Chinese values?
- which nations share Chinese values?
- are there other value groupings by country?

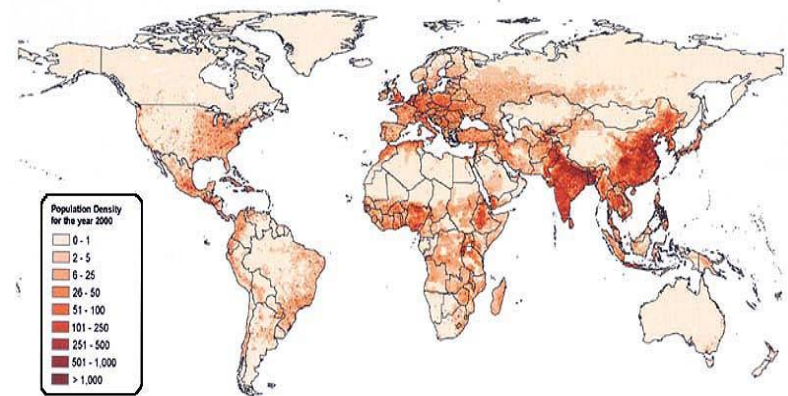
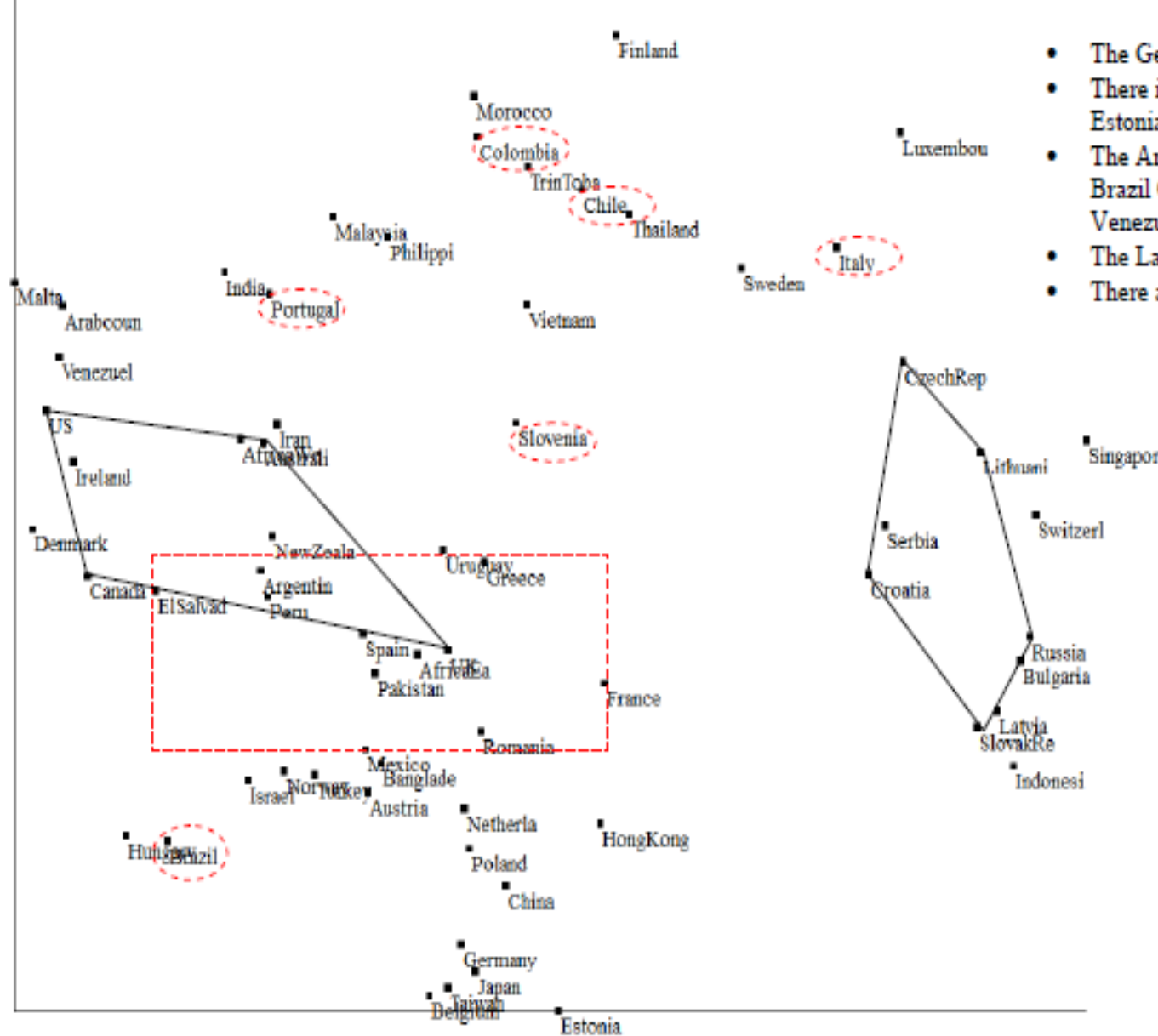
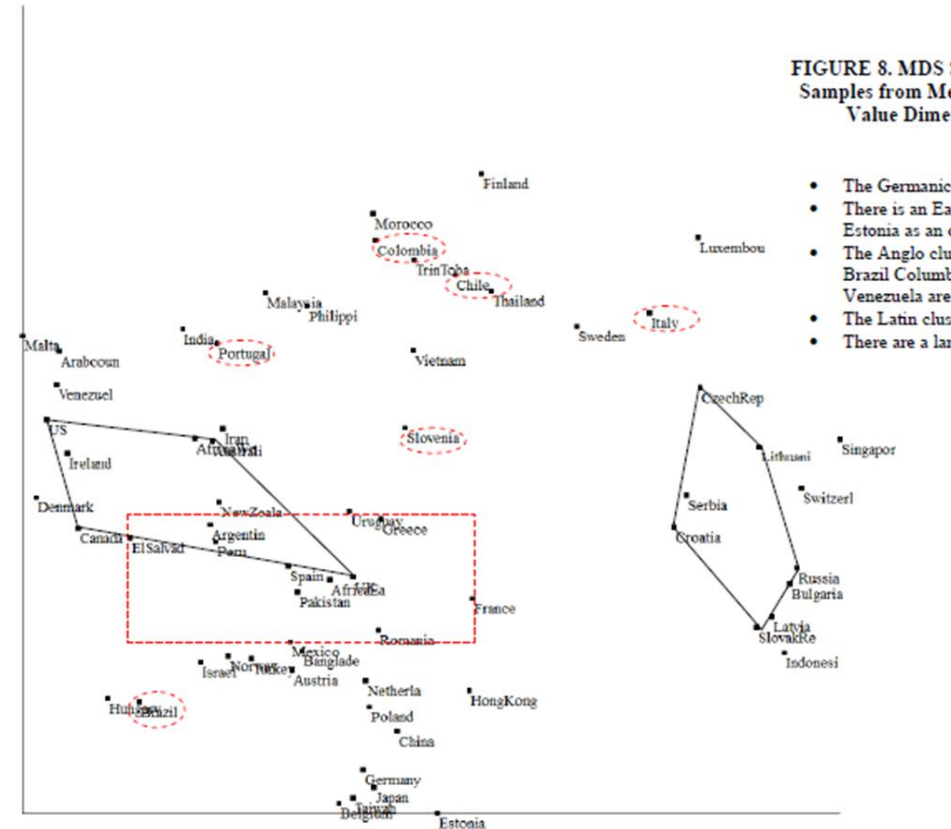


FIGURE 8. MDS SSA Two-Dimensional Plot of Samples from Means of Hofstede's 6 Cultural Value Dimension Means from 2010



Tentative conclusions about national values from the Hofstede analysis

- China is close to many “Western” countries, e.g., Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, but distant from many, e.g., Finland, Italy, Sweden
- China is close to some “Chinese” countries, e.g., Hong Kong and Taiwan, but distant from another, e.g., Singapore



A finer assessment of the current concern about “Western values” in Chinese educational practice

- recent critiques of Western values by Chinese authorities, including Education Minister, Yuan Guiren
- recent articles questioning these attacks as “self-defeating”, e.g., by Pei Minxin: <http://www.scmp.com/comment/article/1710698/chinas-self-defeating-crackdown-western-values?page=all>
- however, “Western values” do not exist empirically as a unified construct discriminating either China or Chinese cultures from America or most other “Western” nations
- the Chinese adage of “Chinese learning for the essentials; Western learning for practicalities” (Zhong xue wei ti, Xi xue wei yong) seems applicable here
- but, is the separation possible in practice? Can “technology” be learned while retaining Chinese “essentials”?
- which ones, and what are the implications for educational practice?

Implications of the Hofstede et al. mapping of national values for educational practice

- which teaching and learning practices and outcomes are associated with the Hofstede 6 will depend then on which one of the 6 dimensions is being compared!
- size and design of primary school classes?
- performance on secondary school achievement tests?
- proportion of population receiving tertiary education?
- national levels of innovation? in university rankings?
- proportion of GNP/capita spent on education at all levels – primary, secondary, tertiary?
- more socially relevant outcomes:
- in per capita GNP? in institutional trust? in respect and tolerance of minorities? in an independent judiciary? in democratic process? in personal health practices? in social volunteerism? in environmental concern? in citizen mental and physical well-being?



The role of school systems in creating desired human capital

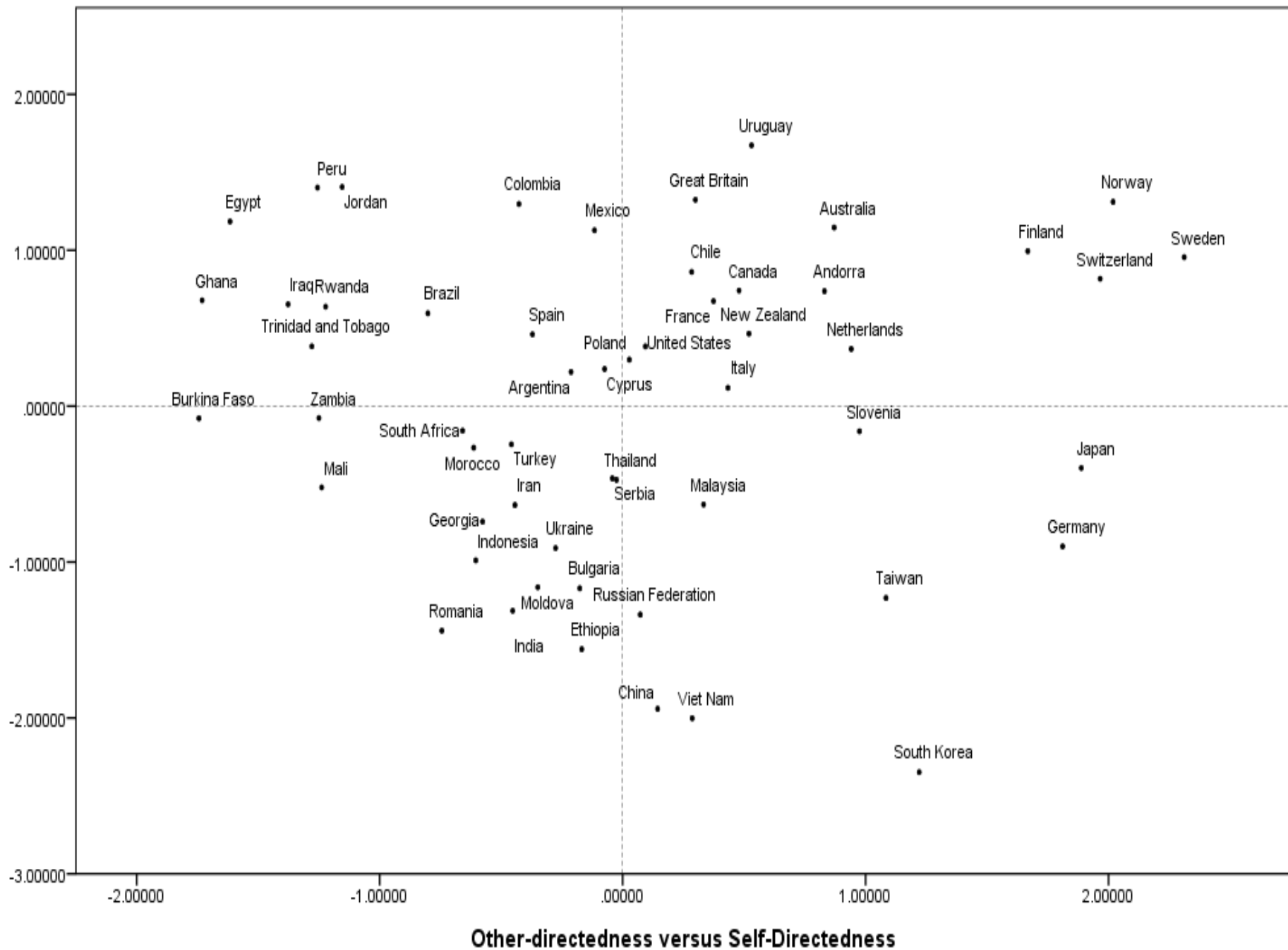


- these are answerable questions based on empirical research!
- for example, performance on secondary school achievement tests is associated with a nation's level of Hofstede's Long-term versus Short-term orientation
- China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Germany, Japan - high; Morocco, Nigeria, Venezuela, USA - low
- this value orientation is related to the way a nation socializes its children for desired qualities
- this socialization starts in the family, but soon moves into school settings

Goals constituting national dimensions of **socialization goals for children** in 55 nations

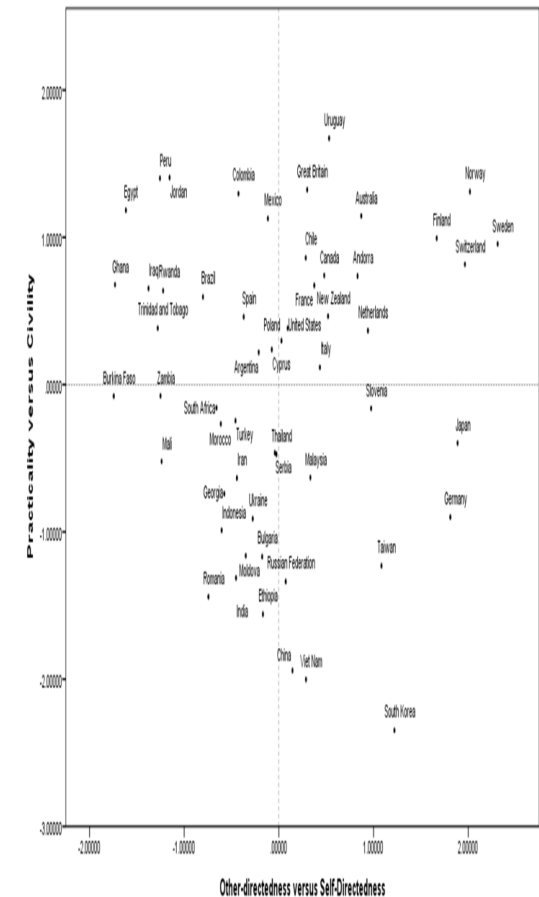


- Provides a national-cultural context for “people-making” in families [Satir, 1972] and other social institutions, e.g., schools
- **Self-directedness versus Other-directedness** = independence + imagination + feeling of responsibility + determination and perseverance – obedience – religious faith – hard work [loadings> .45]
- **Civility versus Practicality** = tolerance and respect of other people + unselfishness – thrift and saving money and things – hard work [loadings> .45]



Socialization goals for children and nation building

- Chinese societies are very high in **Practicality**, moderate in **Self-directedness**
- **Practicality** in raising children associated with low levels of gender empowerment, low societal cynicism and low egalitarianism in society
- **Self-directedness** in raising children associated with high global competitiveness, high GNP/capita and low corruption perception
- correlations do not establish causation, however what other empirical guides to shaping national futures do we have?

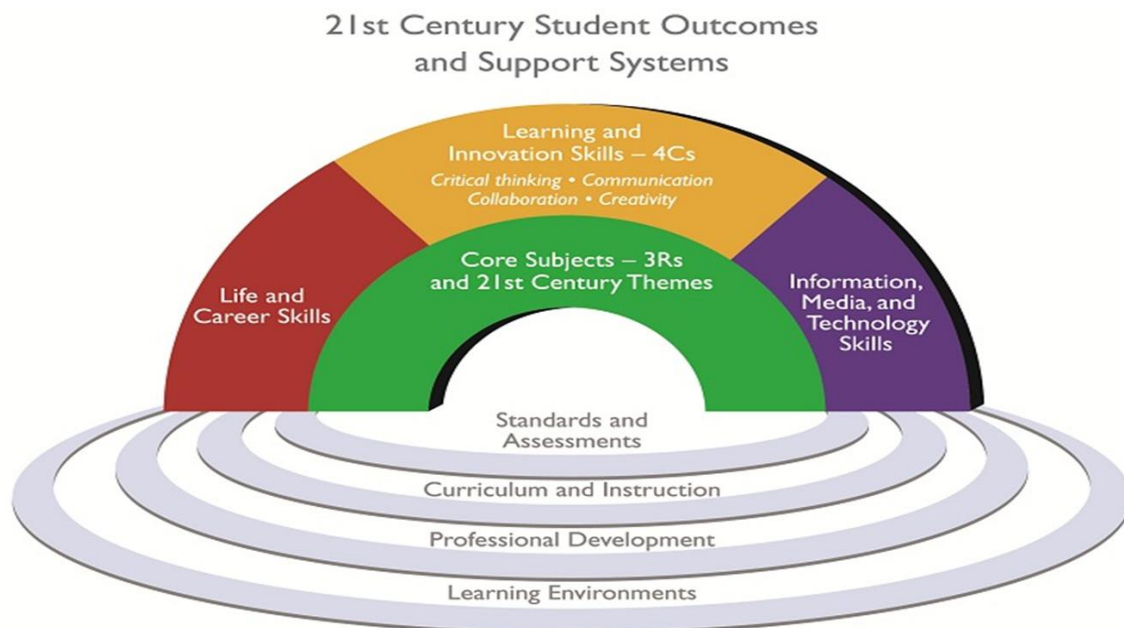


That was then; this is now!

The Seven Cs – 21st Century Lifelong Skills

Seven Cs	Component Skills
Critical Thinking-and-Doing	Problem-solving, Research, Analysis, Project Management, etc.
Creativity	New Knowledge Creation, "Best Fit" Design Solutions, Artful Storytelling, etc.
Collaboration	Cooperation, Compromise, Consensus, Community-building, etc.
Cross-cultural Understanding	Across Diverse Ethnic, Knowledge and Organizational Cultures
Communication	Crafting Messages and Using Media Effectively
Computing / ICT Literacy	Effective Use of Electronic Information and Knowledge Tools
Career & Learning Self-reliance	Managing Change, Lifelong Learning and Career Redefinition

- Is schooling in the 21st century changing?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ax5cNlutAys>
- linking skills to educational context



Educational innovations for the 21st century



- recent initiative in Singapore:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_pLK7ghGw4
- how can initiatives responsive to 21st century realities be applied in any school setting without compromising cherished national values?
- **questions, questions!**

