TRAVAUX ET RECHERCHES DU GÉRAC

Working paper

Chinese Soft Power and African Students Managerial Practices Development

Alexis Abodohoui

Doctorant à la Faculté des sciences de l'administration
Université Laval, Québec, Canada

Alexis Abodohoui holds a Bachelor (General Administration) degree from University of Abomey-Calavi (National School of Administration and Magistrate), a Master (Business Administration) and PhD (Organizational Behaviour) from Wuhan University of Technology (China). In 2011, he gained internship with UNESCAP (United Nations for Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific). In fall of 2012, he joined Laval University where he is completing another doctoral program in Strategy and International Business. He is researcher at the Chair Stephen A. Jarislowsly and lecturer at Faculty of management (Ulaval). He received several grants supports and has been involved into differents academic associations of his department.

alexis.abodohoui.1@ulaval.ca

Ce travail a été supervisé par monsieur Zhan Su, professeur de stratégie et de management à la Faculté des sciences de l'administration de l'Université Laval et titulaire de la Chaire Stephen-A.-Jarislowsky en gestion des affaires internationals. Monsieur Su est également membre du GÉRAC.

CHINESE SOFT POWER AND AFRICAN STUDENTS MANAGERIAL PRACTICES DEVELOPMENT

Abstract:

This study examines the influence of Chinese soft power on the development of African students' managerial practices. Data collected from eight public universities in Wuhan (China) involving 206 students from 39 African countries were analysed through factor analysis and linear multiple regression. We found that most African students perceive that whereas the influence of Chinese soft power on entrepreneurship development and competitiveness of enterprises is positive, it is only partial on business network and knowledge sharing development. The results of the study enable us to propose a conceptual framework and provide some directions for future research.

Keywords: Chinese soft power; African students; managerial practices development; sense-making

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INTRODUCTION

China has emerged for some years now in a very spectacular way. She has become a subject of world interest because of her importance in the global economic system and the south-south cooperation. The decades of strong Chinese economic growth and development trajectory have captivated many countries and peoples of the world. Since the 1990s, African countries, being historical partners of China, opened their doors even more to Chinese investments and cooperation. The penetration of China into Africa is moreover facilitated by the Chinese global strategy known as "Go Out" adopted by the Chinese government for the new millennium.

Today there are numerous studies on Chinese investments in Africa. However, it is remarkable that China has become ipso facto a privileged partner of Africa not only in the domain of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (Clark & Drinkwater, 2008) and infrastructural construction (Alden, 2005), but also in the training of African elites. In fact based on the Sino-Africa cooperation and in conformity with the contents of the memorandum of FOCAC, China grants bursaries to students from more than 50 African countries to study in Chinese universities. In addition, more than 700 Chinese instructors work in Africa as part of Human Resources Development Initiative program put in place by the Chinese government. The objective of this program is to enable African countries to provide themselves with the human resources capable of instilling a new management, economic, technological and innovative dynamics.

It is remarkable that the results of the research carried out on the presence of China in Africa are in large part very controversial due to the difficulties encountered in attempts to provide a complete and credible assessment of Chinese impact in Africa. The double polarizations—new colonizer v development accelerator, friend v enemy—constitutes today an academic issue that calls for further research. Africans choose individually and for different reasons to go to study in China. This choice is informed by their subjective

perception of China which is predominantly psychological. The social learning or managerial practices acquisition of each of them is unique and therefore the meaning is subject to individual and situational actions.

This is why, to better anchor this study, it would be propitious to bring in the social dimension of the construction of meaning. This dimension has also been addressed by some authors, notably Weick (1995) in his sense-making perspective. The presence of African students in Chinese universities presents, therefore, an opportunity to help shape the development of managerial skills or aptitudes of some future African leaders who would be part of the elite community. Being in an environment or situation that is other than African, these international students, by their presence in China, construct own meanings their daily through their actions. These meanings, in connection to the learning opportunities and lived situations, are, among other things, the beginnings of the building of a business network, the competitiveness of African enterprises, and the development of a creative spirit.

Consequently, a research devoted to the analysis of the potential impacts of Chinese soft power on the business practices of Africans through their presence in Chinese universities is quite pertinent. The aim of this study is therefore to analyze, through the sense-making concept based on Chinese "soft power the African students' perception the Chinese managerial practices. How do African students in China perceive the characteristics of Chinese managerial practices? Does the time African students spend in China allow them to develop, among other things, business network, the spirit of entrepreneurship, and above all the development of aptitudes for the transfer of knowledge?

To answer these questions, we thoroughly examine various prominent scholarly research and pubications. We have done a survey about the African perception of Chinese soft power and its impacts on managerial skills. The first section will define soft power focusing primarily on different scholars' presentations of the concept. Particular attention will be paid to the Chinese soft power and its managerial implications. The second section provides a theoretical foundation of sense-making and different hypothesis will be presented for the practical policy analysis. The third section deals with the data collection and analysis. At the end, findings are described; the perception of African students in China in respect to the Chinese managerial skills, through the sense-making theory, is

discussed. It is worth mentioning that this study is one of the first empirical studies of soft power as a unique model of education cooperation between China and Africa, characterised by multiple directions of knowledge movement.

CHINESE SOFT POWER AND SINO – AFRICAN EXCHANGES

We are using power here in the context of having power over others, that is, the ability to influence the behavior of others so as to achieve some desired outcomes. It is the ability to get another person to do something that he or she would not otherwise have done (Dahl, 1957, 2005). Wilson defined the power is an ability to influence another to act in way in which that entity would not act otherwise (Wilson, 2008). Nye introduced the gap about other research on the perception of power such as soft and hard power. Nye (2004) describes soft power variously as "the ability to shape preferences of others…the ability to attract, and attraction often leads to acquiescence". It is also the "ability to get others to want the outcomes you want because of your cultural or ideological appeal". Nye (1990) identifies in his research three sources of soft: American culture, international laws and institutions, American multinationals corporations. But in his recent research, he adds to culture, political values and foreign policies to this list (Nye & Shin, 2007). National, cultural, and political values and international policies are some of the important resources for the development of a nation and the attraction of other nations and peoples. These resources help a country to project a more favourable image to the international community and enhance its soft power (Fan, 2008). Vulving (2009) namely benevolence, brilliance and beauty.

Chinese soft power is envisioned as multiples meanings. Most of Chinese scholars include the power of culture, language, civilisation and the intellect, in their concept of soft power. According to Huning (1993), culture is the main source of States 'soft power. However, Chinese culture is far from being homogenic, having undergone many social, cultural and economic transformations in the last 30 years. China today is a world of contrasts; and the propellers of the Chinese attitude have three main sources of influence called the 3Cs: Confucianism, Communism and Capitalism. The influence of Confucianism is manifested by the values transmitted by the four schools of thought namely Confucianism, Bouddhism, Taoism and Legalism. The central elements of Confucianism are summed up by respect to the ancients, deference to authority, being

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mindful of hierarchy, modesty, and above all, harmony (Li, 2008). Considered a feudal and reactionary idea during the Maoist era, today it actually represents a mixture of a group of traditional Chinese ideas and has a varied influence (according to the setting and the region) on the Chinese. From 1949 to 1979, the Chinese Communist Party replaced Confucianism with Marxist-Lenninist and Maoist principles. In fact, the communist heritage made it possible to spread values like the spirit of self-sacrifice, abnegation, the sense of discipline and togetherness. As a result, in the economic plan for instance, all the activities must obey "human conscience" instead of economic laws. However, the propagation of capitalism since 1979 has been favorable to openness and economic reform with the aim of improving the efficiency of economic activities and also making workers responsible. In these new circumstances, the Chinese have not only adopted a new standard of living, but have also started a transition in their behavior and mentality. Having progressively accepted the market notions of competition, of profit and money, the Chinese are becoming more and more "rational". They are all looking for a way to get rich above everything else. In a space of few years, individual enrichment became irresistible; the quest for personal interest has become overwhelming. It would therefore be difficult to give an unequivocal definition of Chinese culture and politics. Notwithstanding, a definition of Chinese soft power must take into consideration the evolution of the Chinese society.

Chinese soft power can be defined as power based on intangible or indirect influences such as organization (nation's) culture, political values and philosophy or belief (W. Liang, 2012). It is the total sum of all the perceptions of the country in the minds of international students, tourists or stakeholders who would adopt and adapt its culture, political values and international policies. Chinese soft power is increasing in respect to its resources in areas of culture, political values and diplomacy (Lele, 2013). China is translating these different resources successfully into desired foreign policy outcomes (Gill & Huang, 2006). Between China and African countries, there is a longstanding economic assistance, technological cooperation, agricultural and medical assistance. Some of scholars tend to contextualise the importance of science and technology as an element of soft power because technology has played an important role in shaping the

geopolitics of the world over the years (Ding, 2014; McGiffert, 2009; Nye, 2004; Nye & Shin, 2007).

In 2006, China issued a comprehensive policy statement "China's Africa policy" which elucidates the principles and scopes of its policy in Africa. It emphasizes China's usual non-interference policy and the five principles of peaceful coexistence. Since then, China has provided preferential loans and credits, instituted a development fund, and offered debt relief and cancellation to African countries. Chinese FDI stock in Africa has increased exponentially from US$1.60 billion in 2005 to US$ 21.23 billion in 2012.

Relations between China and Africa is unprecedented in history and is based on different principles from others countries especially other countries such as European and USA (Feng & Mu, 2010). The formulation of these policies gives opportunities for China to strengthen its multilateral cooperation and made China – Africa cooperation more strategic and more relevant. The new direction of China's Foreign policy was encapsulated in five fundamental principles of peaceful coexistence namely: mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity, non-aggression; non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence. This loyal friendship was illuminated sooner by China Prime Minister Li Peng since 1990. China's strategic political economic relation with African governments plays an important role in international negotiation. China support African countries at United Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) to assert their own independent voice. The most of African governments have stopped diplomatic relationship with Macau, Hong kong, Taipei in order to help the mainland to unify these territories. Chinese political values are transverse in several areas but are mainly in the areas of diplomacy and cooperation as illustrated below.

The presence of African students in China through education cooperation could impact the way these foreign students perceive their skills. Ramo's Beijing consensus (Kennedy, 2010) or China's economic development model that has its roots in Chinese soft power could be seen by them as a viable alternative to the African or Western models of managerial practices.

Table 1 Main reasons of Chinese presence in African countries

Chinese presence in Africa	Observations and conclusions	Selected references
Needs for new markets and investments opportunities	Economic boom (Investment opportunities for SOEs, PEs and Entrepreneurs) Saturation of domestic economy Chinese MNC competitiveness in international economy (Going global strategy) African countries as strategic for international market (AGOA, EBA) and consummation power of Chinese manufactures products Resources security	J. Zhang et al. (2013) Luo, Xue, and Han (2010) Konings (2007) Alden (2005)
Symbolic diplomacy and development cooperation	Investment in public infrastructure Strengthening of trade tie Development Assistance and cooperation with African government Economic and social development in Africa Provision of scholarship Humanitarian resources deployment resources (medical personnel support, peacekeeping, Chinese teachers) Harmonious relationship with local communities	Corkin (2012) L. Wang and Dottin (2011) Chuan and Orr (2009) Gagnon (2011) Duarte (2012)
Strategic partnership	South – south solidarity and cooperation Strategic partnership	Konings (2007) Muekalia (2004) Melville and Owen (2005)

Table 2 displays several managerial outcomes (important for manager, leader and entrepreneur) soft power in general and specifically Chinese soft power could produce not only among the Chinese but also in their contact with other nationalities.

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Table 2 Comprehensive perspective on soft power

Soft power resources	Production and Reciprocal mechanism	Managerial implications	Tools of soft power
Benignity (shine of capabilities and successes)	**Gratitude and sympathy** self-esteem of others; unselfishly Behave in non-threatening ways to others Altruism (positives attitudes) Bi or multilateral cooperation	Build trust (xin) goodwill and lead by example Self-cultivation and integrity intrinsic quality Determination and perseverance	Cultural events Foreign immigrant/asylum application International students Exchanges programs Broadcasting or teaching a country language and promoting a study of a country Tourists Book and music sales Popular sports Nobel prize winners Life expectancy Overseas aids Spending on public diplomacy Management and resolution of conflicts Scientific collaboration
Brilliance (the resonance of shared norms and goals)	**Admiration** Human beings to learn from the success others Copying the roots of your success and your capability Imitation or emulation (practices, policies, values, or vision)	Teamwork building (work together) Network building (business connections) Cooperation and collaboration	
Beauty (kindness of behavior and attitude)	**Admiration** Tendency to seek union with like-minded people Confidence, friendship and cooperation (join forces) Need for aesthetic experience (Charismatic; country leader)	Peacekeeping building Returning and paying back to the community (CSR) Diversity and inclusion	

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Different authors in their studies recognized that Chinese presence in Africa help to develop cultural exchange, international relationship between countries and has shaped african view about the model of development (Pannell, 2008; Veeck & Diop, 2012). One no longer needs to demonstrate the attractiveness of China in third world countries. Most of the South-East Asia countries have a good cooperation with China and send thousands of students there to be trained in diverse fields (Kang, 2010; X. Liang, Lu, & Wang, 2012). This position gives China the opportunity to play a leadership role and to ensure a peaceful and stable world according to her principles by the promotion of her values through education and above all by making the Confucius Institutes functioning (Ding, 2010; Hunter, 2009; Paradise, 2009; Sautman & Hairong, 2007; Sun, 2009). According to the UNESCO data, China occupies the third place, behind the United States and the United Kingdom in the matter of the destination of international students, and hosts a total of 328, 330 students in 2012.

France, which is the first destination of African students, began in 2009 to experience a decreasing number of these students, from 107, 707 to 105, 766 in 2005 (Ferdjani, 2012). Currently there is a growing number of African students who are either beneficiaries of study grants of bilateral co-operations (gongfei), or pay from their own pockets (zifei), to enlist in Chinese universities. After one to two years of studying the Chinese language, most African students continue with their studies in literature, technology, medicine or engineering (Wuthnow, 2008). This 3000-year-old language, called Putonghua or mandarin, hitherto prohibited to foreigners until as late as the 1950s (Kane, 2006) has today become not only one of the factors of the glow of Chinese culture and values (Feng & Mu, 2010; Kurlantzick, 2007; Zhao & Huang, 2010), but equally a lingua franca (Spencer, 2008). In 2007, according to the statistics of the Chinese ministry of education, the number of African students in China has almost quadrupled from 1386 to 5923 (Lagrée, 2013). The actual number of African students in China would be 12, 000, including 8, 000 who are paying their way (Bodomo & Ma, 2012).

The conclusions of FOCAC, the Peking Consensus, the establishment of 326 Confucius Institutes in 81 countries of the world of which 32 are African countries (Gill & Huang, 2006; King, 2010), also have impacts on the massive departure of Africans for China. Through the program known as "Plan for Africa's Young Talents …," China envisages the training of 30, 000 Africans and has given 18, 000 grants (Bredeloup, 2014). In 2011, Brautigam reported that more than 15, 000 African functionaries have been trained in the Chinese formation centers (Bräutigam, 2011). Sino-African cooperation becomes one of the key factors in the promotion and reinforcement of the educational systems of African countries (King, 2014).

On the international level (Chinese foreign policies), China has become one of the privileged partners of African countries by the adoption of predictable and pragmatic investment policy since the end of the Mao era (Jackson (Jackson, Louw, & Zhao, 2013; Pigato & Gourdon, 2014). Chinese investment in Africa has positively been affected by the "stepping out", strategy adopted by the Chinese authorities in the new millennium. This policy means that China concentrated efforts on encouraging investment in overseas markets in order to support economic development and sustain economic reform in China (Clark & Drinkwater, 2008). China is fostering intergovernmental cooperation with

African countries through bilateral investment treaties (BIT), regional trade agreement (RTA). The establishment of six-country-level (Zambia, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Mauritius) special economic zone (SEZ) is helping the parties to strength their cooperation. Chinese FDI stock in Africa has increased exponentially from US$1.60 billion in 2005 to US$ 21.23 billion in 2012. China has provided preferential loans and credits, instituted a development fund, and offered debt relief and cancellation to African countries. Most African countries have been forgiven about US $1.3 billion in debts. In 2013, there are almost 2398 Chinese companies and entities that were approved to operate abroad from 1998 to 2012. There are 1120 SOEs and 1278 PEs (MOFCOM, 2013). These authorizations are divers: mining, forestry and agriculture (Huang & Wilkes, 2011). At the end of 2005, there were about 700 funded Chinese ventures in Africa (Klossek, Linke, & Nippa, 2012). Due to this cooperation, more than 900 socioeconomic projects in Africa have been completed. Chinese investments, the construction of infrastructures in Africa, the exchange of knowledge and the cultural exchanges facilitate the rapprochement of both the peoples of Africa and China.

Relations between China and Africa are unprecedented in history and are based on different political values from other countries. By 2010, China has established formal diplomatic relations with most African countries (49 at least) (Cheung, De Haan, Qian, & Yu, 2012). In 2006, China issued a comprehensive policy statement "China's Africa policy" which elucidates the principles and scopes of its policy in Africa. It emphasizes China's usual non-interference policy and the five principles of peaceful coexistence. The new direction of China's Foreign policy was encapsulated in five fundamental principles of peaceful coexistence namely: mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity, non-aggression; non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence. Due to this loyal friendship many Chinese officials were in Africa to present the five point-proposal which established the terms of the new relationship with Africa (Taylor, 2009).

Still in line with the strengthening of its foreign policy, China participates in peace keeping programs by sending more than 4000 soldiers, police officers, and teachers for international solidarity. This program makes her an active guardian of peace (Duarte, 2012) and an exemplary leader in the south-south cooperation (Davies, Draper, &

Edinger, 2014; Konings, 2007). According to Amanor (2013), China's strategic political and economic relations with African governments play an important role in international negotiation. Most African governments have cut off diplomatic relations with Macau, Hong kong, and Taipei in order to help the mainland to unify these territories. By virtue of these diverse programs, China she has become a model of development that fascinates the majority of African countries (Ovadia, 2013).

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

There exists a great variety of managerial practices, for the purposes of this study, we basically identified four managerial practices that are inter related, namely business network, knowledge transfer, entrepreneurship and competitiveness of enterprises.

Business network and knowledge sharing development

The first African students arrived in China in 1960s. They took advantage of their holidays to go and work as interpreters or intermediaries of trade in the big cities like Macao or Hong Kong (Bredeloup, 2014). Today there is an intermingling of Africans and Chinese that was favorable to the construction of business relationships and a network of Sino-African enterprises. Although studies of the networks emerged at the era of globalization, it was not the case up to the 1990's. Assens (2003) analyzes the interest and criteria of choice and the success factors of business networks and concludes that the networks are favorable to the cooperation between members and represent a link for the sharing of values among the members. By exploring friendships and other types of relationship through theoretical arguments and studies of relationship from business management studies as well as anthropology and organizational, Chang (2013) explores the friendships between Chinese and Zambian at the workplace and concludes that it allows the creation of business network.

Social networking relationships create opportunities for knowledge acquisition, exploitation and business creation (De Carolis, Litzky, & Eddleston, 2009; Dyer & Singh, 1998). The research shows that business relationships serve crucial functions in contributing to the learning processes shared between both groups (trust, empathy, consideration, etc.), will increase close relationship of people, and contributing to the learning processes shared between both groups (Chang, 2013). According to Hassan and Hatmaker (2014), by learning knowledge, language, values and culture and skills new

comers could become a member of social networks. It is empirically demonstrated that the construction of networks are favorable to the development of emerging economies (Acquaah, 2007; Peng & Luo, 2000). Network relations and subsequent interactions could guaranty access to financial and strategic resources. These relations provide organizations, and in this specific case, also to countries the capacity to have access to high quality information on products, marketing and technological possibilities. This information could equally help to avoid the cost of transactions by enabling access to available contacts and business opportunities (Burt, 2004).

Social network also creates opportunities for the acquisition and exploitation of knowledge (Dyer & Singh, 1998). Social networking and the relations developed with different communities also provide actors with entrepreneurial capabilities because they facilitate the sharing of information and opportunities, funding sources, and markets for products (Acquaah, 2007). These advantages are particularly important for African students in China, for reasons of the high level of uncertainty of the institutions, lack of market support that would facilitate economic exchange, access to information, resources, and knowledge. Thus, cultural links, policies and the appropriation of certain Chinese values could help African students and the Chinese to develop a conception of business network between the two parties (Xing, Liu, Tarba, & Cooper, 2014). By extrapolation, according to Salancik and Pfeffer (1978), the mastering of the Chinese language and culture could constitute a support base for the building of socio-economic relationships.

Hypothesis 1: African students in China perceive that business networks are positively influenced by the Chinese soft power.

Hypothesis 2: African students in China perceive that the development of knowledge sharing is positively influenced by the Chinese soft power.

Entrepreneurship development and competitiveness of enterprises

There exists little study on the entrepreneurial capacity of international students. Nowadays one sees research that has to do with the immigrant's entrepreneurship, on the development of entrepreneurial reflexes at the level of students in the administrative sciences (Walter, Parboteeah, & Walter, 2013). However, recently it was demonstrated that international students enjoy educational enclaves that provide them with a variety of resources (formal schooling, social and cultural experiences of the host country) to start

their own businesses (Kerr & Schlosser, 2010). Some other research also proved the correlation between the academic level of international students and the planning for new venture (Liao & Gartner, 2007). The study of Davey, Plewa, and Struwig (2011) aims to identify the differences between African and Europeans students with regard to their entrepreneurial intentions, attitudes towards entrepreneurship, roles and entrepreneurial experience. It found that students from developing and emerging economies are more likely to envisage future careers as entrepreneurs and are consequently more positive towards entrepreneurship than those from the industrialized countries. In the same vein, A. M. Williams and Baláž (2005), by exploring some differences in the economic behavior of three contrasting groups of returning skilled migrant laborers advocate that working and studying abroad help entrepreneurs to acquire certain special competence such as interpersonal skills, self-confidence and the role of social recognition. Early in 1995, Fan found that Chinese cultural values such as Confucian culture contribute to the economic miracle in the Far East and is supportive of entrepreneurship.

As a result, the contact of Africans with Chinese cultural values could furnish them with the best tools to become real entrepreneurs for the future competitiveness of African enterprises. Moreover there exist, following from this, some research that demonstrate that the presence of China on the continent has had many positive impacts, not only on entrepreneurship, but also on the competitiveness of African enterprises. For Cheung et al. (2012), Sino – African relation creates the opportunity for poverty reduction, the achievement of Millennium Development Goal. Chinese companies with long presence in African markets have shown increasing adeptness at developing deeper linkages with local business (Lahimer, 2009). According to Djeri-wake (2009), China's interest in Africa transcends resources and includes areas such as political choices, institutions, human capital, entrepreneurship culture and leadership.

Bräutigam (2009), provides a nuanced view of the impact of Chinese FDI in African economies. She finds that in Mauritius and Nigeria, Chinese local joint-ventures offered employment and learning opportunities. Chinese presence in Africa has augmented collective resources inflow, increased capital utilization, increased output and generated employment opportunities (Alves, 2013; Bräutigam & Zhang, 2013). The transplantation of labor intensive factories from China to Africa could jumpstart local economic

development like it was done in East Asia, described as flying-geese (Ozawa & Bellak, 2010). Babatunde and Low (2013) argued that the presence of China companies in Nigeria has brought intensive competition on project financing and sectoral deployment, speed of delivery, supply chain-management and overall service quality. The Chinese are seen by Nigerians to have promoted local welfare and local business market (Mohan, 2013).

Hypothesis 3: African students in China perceive that their entrepreneurial capacities are positively influenced by the Chinese soft power.

Hypothesis 4: African students in China perceive that the competitiveness of enterprises is positively influenced by the Chinese soft power.

RESEARCH METHOD

To test the conceptual framework, this study is based on a survey by questionnaire circulated to African students in Chinese universities at Wuhan. The capital of the province of Hubei and known as the "Chicago of China" (Dixon, 2013), Wuhan is an industrial city which welcomes thousands of international students from all over the world. Estimated at about 10 million, Wuhan's population is close to that of the Republic of Benin (China Demographics Profile, 2014). At Wuhan, eight universities ranked among the best in China welcome international students. These are China University of Geosciences, Huazhong Agricultural University, Huazhong Normal University, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan University, and Zhongnan University of Economics and Law.

The questionnaire was drawn up in English and French in response to the diversity of African countries was approved by the ethics committee of Laval University under the number 2014-098/16-06-2014. The questionnaire was sent electronically (Pickard, 2013) to a mailing list of 1020 African students in the universities mentioned above. Thanks to the availability of the internet in the dormitories and class rooms, this format made it possible for us to reach the majority of the respondents or 602 students. First of all we tested the questionnaire on a sample of 30 students. This phase allowed us to make some corrections, notably the repartition of five main areas of studies and the clarification of the FDI, a technical concept that appeared not well understood by the respondents. After this correction, the entire question was composed and it contained 39 questions and 5

pages. For each question, except those that have to do with the profile of the respondents (see the table), the students expressed their agreement or disagreement on a Likert scale (1: strongly disagree; 2: somewhat disagree; 3: neutral; 4: somewhat agree; 5: strongly agree). 206 responses, representing 32%, were exploited following a process of clarification and verification of the data.

According to the table 2, one can see that people from 39 African countries participated in the survey. The results indicate that West African countries are the most represented with 87 respondents, then follows Central Africa with 42, East Africa 27, the Caribbean Islands 21, South Africa 17, and finally North Africa 10. These respondents were mostly male students, representing 56, 8%, while female students represent 43.2%. One could observe through this table that 51.9% of the respondents are Masters students aged between 25 and 35; 43.2% aged between 15 and 25 are doing a licentiate program while 4.9% represent doctoral students aged 35 and above. We deduced that most of the respondents already had a university education before coming to China for graduate studies. One notes too that 41.3% of respondents are studying engineering sciences, 37.4% are in the area of management and economics, 13,6% are studying health sciences (medicine), 6.8% are in the arts and literature and 1.0% in the other areas of studies.

Table 2 demographic characteristics of sample agents

Nationality			Degree			Fields of Studies				
			Bsch	Msc	PhD	Mgt&Eco	E.Sc	A&Lit.	Med.	Other
West	**83**		**17**	**42**	**24**	**41**	**30**	**5**	**5**	**2**
	Benin	10.2	9.5	57.1	33.3	42.9	47.6	4.8	4.8	
	Ghana	5.8	25.0	50.0	25.0	58.3	33.3	8.3		
	Mali	3.9	25.0	62.5	12.5	37.5	50.0		12.5	
	Togo	3.9	50.0	25.0	25.0	50.0	12.5		25.0	12.5
	Côte d'Iv	3.4	28.6	14.3	57,1	42.9	429		143	
	Niger	2.9	16.7	50.0	33.3	33.3	50.0	16.7		
	Liberia	1.9		10. 0		50.0	25.0	25.0		
	Nigeria	1.9		75.0	25.0	75.0	25.0			
	Cape V.	1.5		33.3	66.7	66.7		33.3		
	Guinea	1.5		33.3	66.7	66.7	33.3			
	Senegal	1.5	33.3	66.7		66.7				33.3
	Sierra L.	1.0		100.0		500	50.0			
	Burkina F.	0.5	100.0			100.0				
	Gambia	0.5	100.0				100.0			
Central	**48**		**28**	**18**	**2**	**9**	**19**	**2**	**18**	

Nationality			Degree			Fields of Studies				
		Bsch	**Msc**	**PhD**	**Mgt&Eco**	**E.Sc**	**A&Lit.**	**Med.**	**Other**
Gabon	7.3	53.3	46.7		13.3	20.0	0.0	66.7	
Rep. Co.	6.8	50.0	35.7	14.3	21.4	35.7	14.3	28.6	
Camr.	4.4	55.6	44.4		11.1	44.4		44.4	
RDC	2.9	83.3	16.7		16.7	83.3			
RCA	1.5	100.0			66.7	33.3			
Chad	0.5		100.0			100.0			
East	**27**	**12**	**9**	**6**	**10.0**	**14.0**	**2.0**	**1.0**	
Burundi	2.9	66.7		33.3		66.7	16.7	16.7	
Djibouti	2.9	33.3	66.7		83.3	16.7			
Tanzania	1.9	25.0	25.0	50.0	75.0	25.0			
Kenya	1.5		66.7	33.3		100.0			
Uganda	1.5	100.0			33.3	66.7			
Rwanda	1.5	66.7	33.3			100.0			
Ethiopia	0.5			100.0	100.0				
Sudan	0.5		100.0				100,0		
Island	**21**	**12**	**9**		**9**	**6**	**2**	**4**	
Madagascar	7.8	62.5	37.5		37.5	25	12.5	25	
Comoros	1.9	50	50		50	50			
Seychelles	0.5		100		100				
South	**17**	**11**	**4**		**4**	**11**	**2**		
Zambia	1.9	50.0	50.0		25.0	75.0			
South Africa	1.5	33.3	66.7		33.3	66.7			
Botswana	1.0	1000				100.0			
Mozambique	1.0	100.0				100.0			
Namibia	1.0	50.0	50.0		50.0	50.0			
Zimbabwe	1.0	50.0	50.0				100.0		
Angola	0.5	100.0				100.0			
Lesotho	0.5	100.0			100.0				
North	**10**	**1**	**4**	**5**	**4**	**5**	**1**		
Morocco	1.5			100.0	33.3	667			
Tunisia	1.5	33.3	667		33.3	33.3	33.3		
Algeria	1.0		50.0	50.0	50.0	50,0			
Mauritania	1.0		50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0			
Gender		**81**	**88**	**37**	**77**	**85**	**14**	**28**	**2**
Male	56.8	38.5	45.3	16.2	37.6	45.3	5.1	10.3	1.7
Female	43.2	40.4	39.3	20.2	37.1	36.0	9.0	18.0	
Old		**81**	**88**	**37**	**77**	**85**	**14**	**28**	**2**
15-25	43.2	71.9	25,8	2.2	36.0	40.4	6.7	15.7	1.1
25-35	51.9	15.9	57.9	26.2	38.3	42.1	6.5	12.1	0.9
35- and more	4.9		300	70.0	40.0	40.0	10.0	10.0	
Total = 206		39.3	42.7	18.0	37.4	41.3	6.8	13.6	1.0

FACTOR ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

We use exploratory factor analysis to explore the underlying dimensionality of the 12 items. We have four dependents variables and three independent variables that we have grouped according to different symbols: Chinese culture (CultEx); political values (PolVal); foreign policy (ForPol); competitiveness of enterprises (CompEnt); business networks (BusNet); entrepreneurial development (EntrDev) and knowledge sharing development (KSDv). First to factor analysis, we have assessed the factorability (Table 3) of the data by applying Bartlett's test of sphericity (1950) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (Sharma, 1995). Thus we obtained a KMO=0.908 and a significant Bartlett's test (chi-square 809.4; pb.000). This indicated factor analysis is appropriate and adequate.

Table 3 KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		**0.908**
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	809.411
	df	36
	Sig.	0.0

Beside these different tests, communalities for all variables were also observed. Loading of less than 0.5 were removed (principle of iteration) from the instrument as per the recommendation of Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010). Three items (KSDv_CultEx = 0.425; BusNet_PolVal = 0.436 and KSDv_PolVal = 0.437) were deleted. This process is recommended as an effective way of deriving a stable factor structure (Rai, Borah, & Ramaprasad, 1996). After three iterations, all remains 9 items loaded satisfactorily onto the two factors (Table 4). The factors analysis was also examined to ensure acceptable levels of variable communality and multi-collinearity (Table 4).

The final scales show in table 4 positive statements. The value of communities ranged from 0.582 to 0.713 for various statements. The same table displays rotated factor matrix that breaks down the items into two factors named : 1: Chinese policy (CompEnt_CultEx, BusNet_CultEx, EntrDev_CultEx) and 2: Cultural exchanged CompEnt_ForPol, BusNet_ForPol, EntrDev_ForPol, KSDv_ForPol, CompEnt_PolVal, EntrDev_PolVal). It

worth mentioning that the same table provide that CompEnt_CultEx explains maximum 51.52 variance followed by BusNet_CultEx (12.02) and others.

Table 4 Communalities, rotated component matrix and variance explained

Communalities			*Rotated Component Matrix(a)*		*Total Variance Explained*		*Squared Loadings*
			Component		*Initial Eigenvalues*		
	Initial	Extraction	Chinese Policy	Cultural Exchange	Total	% of Variance	% of Variance
CompEnt_CultEx	1	0.592	0.297	0.710	4.637	51.52	42.009
BusNet_CultEx	1	0.578	0.212	0.730	1.082	12.02	21.536
EntrDev_CultEx	1	0.582	0.127	0.752	0.729	8.10	
CompEnt_ForPol	1	0.695	0.818	0.162	0.652	7.24	
BusNet_ForPol	1	0.682	0.778	0.276	0.502	5.57	
EntrDev_ForPol	1	0.713	0.801	0.268	0.399	4.43	
KSDv_ForPol	1	0.662	0.793	0.180	0.364	4.04	
CompEnt_PolVal	1	0.628	0.725	0.320	0.327	3.63	
EntrDev_PolVal	1	0.587	0.749	0.163	0.309	3.44	

In Table 6, correlation matrix is presented. The results show a significant, positive and meaningful correlation between variable. The study of the correlation coefficients between the variables ensures that the variables in the model are not collinear. Table 6 shows the cross-correlations between all variables in this study. These correlations are all below the threshold of 0.80, a value beyond which the collinearity is considered problematic (Carricano, Poujol, & Bertrandias, 2010).

Table 5 Pearson Correlation

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. CompEnt_CultEx	1								
2. BusNet_CultEx	.412**	1							
	.000								
3. EntrDev_CultEx	.377**	.331**	1						
	.000	.000							
4. CompEnt_ForPol	.316**	.315**	.284**	1					
	.000	.000	.000						
5. BusNet_ForPol	.405**	.355**	.318**	.655**	1				
	.000	.000	.000	.000					
6. EntrDev_ForPol	.406**	.376**	.308**	.655**	.645**	1			
	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000				
7. KSDv_ForPol	.333**	.301**	.298**	.657**	.606**	.641**	1		
	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000			

8.	*CompEnt_PolVal*	.437**	.390**	.276**	.555**	.585**	.579**	.524**	1
		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
9.	*EntrDev_PolVal*	.396**	.249**	.212**	.496**	.530**	.580**	.504**	.628**	1
		.000	.000	.002	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	

**Correlation significant at the .01 level

In order to assess the overall effect of soft power on managerial practices development of African student in China, linear multiple regression has been performed. The regression model considered Chinese policy and Cultural exchange as independent variables and overall managerial practices as dependant variables. The regression analysis showed that a good deal with of variation in EntrDev_ForPol (71.3%; p=0.000) CompEnt_ForPol (69.5%; p=0.000) to the Chinese soft power. All other dimensions significantly contribute toward explaining the variance of the overall rating.

Table 6 Linear multiple regression analysis

Dependent variables	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
CompEnt_CultEx	0.770	0.592	0.588	0.266	146.742	0.000
BusNet_CultEx	0.760	0.578	0.574	0.275	138.434	0.000
EntrDev_CultEx	0.763	0.582	0.578	0.282	140.656	0.000
CompEnt_ForPol	0.834	0.695	0.692	0.609	230.207	0.000
BusNet_ForPol	0.826	0.682	0.679	0.650	216.596	0.000
EntrDev_ForPol	0.844	0.713	0.710	0,597	250.735	0.000
KSDv_ForPol	0.813	0.662	0.658	0.677	197.587	0.000
CompEnt_PolVal	0.792	0.628	0.624	0.280	170.402	0.000
EntrDev_PolVal	0.766	0.587	0.583	0.297	143.518	0.000

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The study is valuable in that it has enabled us to assess African students' perception through the optic of Chinese soft power. It is equally valuable because it allows for a systematic assessment of different background perceptions of the students on managerial capabilities acquisition during their studies in China. Their different perceptions could be linked to the managerial outcomes of some African businesses in the future. Little research has addressed the process through which soft power could be translated into managerial outcome. Investigation of this process is hampered because not only is the concept of soft power complex and difficult to define, but there is also no coherent

framework that links students' perception and situation to specific managerial outcomes in foreign countries. Overall, based on the results, we found support to the hypothesis 3 and 4. Theoretically, these findings corroborate some authors' views about China-Africa relationship. Friedman (2009), shows that the presence of China in Africa is positively transforming Africa by bringing entrepreneurial talent and industry to Africa, much as Japan brought it to Southeast Asia in the 1960s and 1970s. For instance, in different sectors, China has strengthened market competition and created jobs for the youth, thereby reducing the crime rate (Lahimer, 2009; Osakwe, 2012). Furthermore, According to Bräutigam (2003) and Bräutigam and Zhang (2013), China-Africa relationship helps to build business network and provide an important catalyst for African industrialization. Concerning hypothesis 1, it is unsupported for Chinese foreign policies. With regard to hypothesis 2, it is supported neither by Chinese culture nor political values. It means that African students in China perceive that Chinese foreign policy has positive impact on development of knowledge sharing. Most of scholars point out the benefits of knowledge and skills sharing between China and Africa(Naidu & Mbazima, 2008). The forum on China and Africa highlights technological cooperation. However there are still some controversies about the real impacts of the knowledge on local economies (Osei-Hwedie, 2012).

Table 7 the results of hypothesis

N°H		Results (✓supported ✗unsupported)		
		Chinese culture	*Polictical values*	*Foreign policies*
H$_1$	Business network	✓	✓	✗
H$_2$	Knowledge sharing development	✗	✗	✓
H$_3$	Entrepreneurship development	✓	✓	✓
H$_4$	Competitiveness of enterprises	✓	✓	✓

For more academic insight, we wondered if there is a relationship between the length of stay in China and the impact of soft power on the perception of African students. The results are particularly interesting. For example on Table 8, we found that there is a connection between soft power, the construction of meaning and the duration of stay in China.
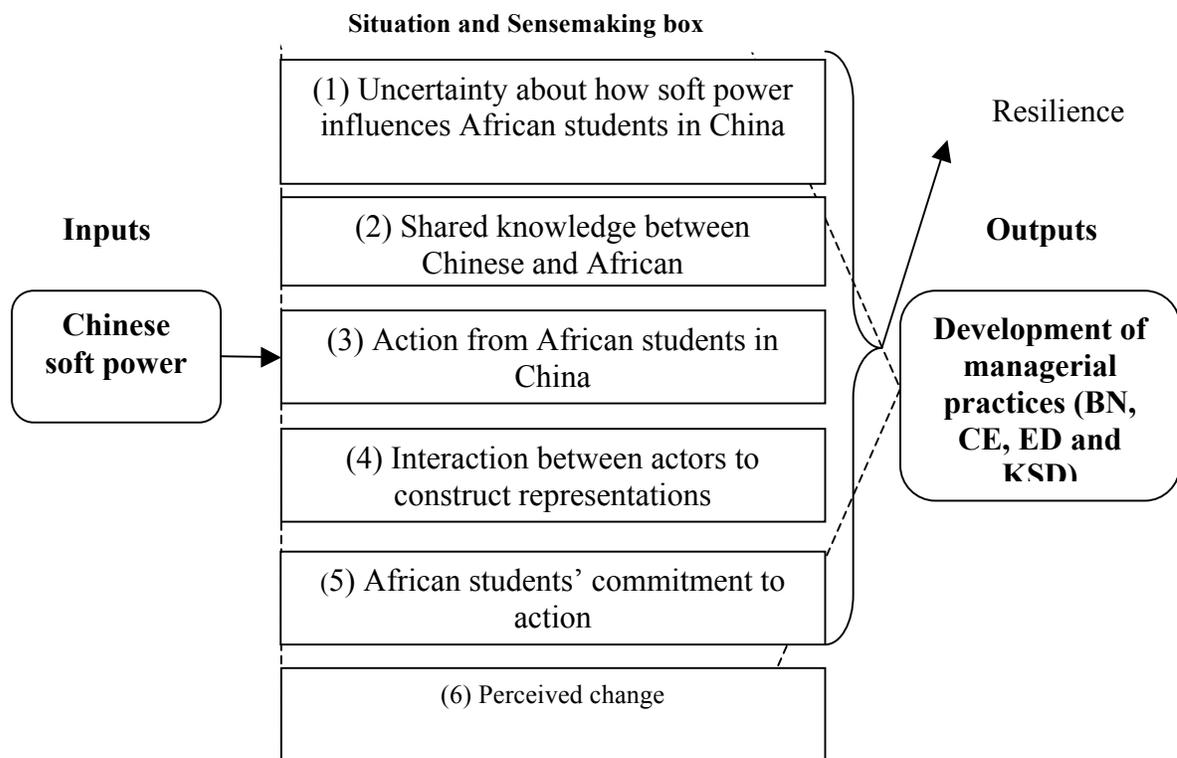
Table 8 Relationship between duration and soft power perception

How long have you been in China?			What do you enjoy most about your stay in China?		
			Sino-African cultural exchange	Chinese foreign policy	Chinese political values
From 0 to 1 year	CompEnt_CultEx	Cult_ex influence Ent_comp	46,88	28,13	25,00
		Non_cult_ex influence Ent_comp	62,50	25,00	12,50
Total			50,00	27,50	22,50
From 1 to 2 years	CompEnt_CultEx	Cult_ex influence Ent_comp	53,85	25,64	20,51
		Non_cult_ex influence Ent_comp	60,00	26,67	13,33
Total			55,56	25,93	18,52
From 2 to 3 years	CompEnt_CultEx	Cult_ex influence Ent_comp	61,36	29,55	9,09
		Non_cult_ex influence Ent_comp	75,00	12,50	12,50
Total			63,46	26,92	9,62
More than 3 years	CompEnt_CultEx	Cult_ex influence Ent_comp	71,74	10,87	17,39
		Non_cult_ex influence Ent_comp	85,71	7,14	7,14
Total			75,00	10,00	15,00

From all the above, we propose a conceptual framework based on the sense-making theory. For Weick, to attain this desired future, the actors must equip themselves with the resilience found in a continuous process of interaction. Resilience is the capacity to maintain a system of organized actions in the face of unusual situations. This resilience enables the actors to face unforeseen situations. Weick (1993) identified four sources of resilience: improvisation and virtual system; wise and respectful attitude. Other authors have worked on social commitment (Salancik, 1977), Autissier and Vandangeon-Derumez (2006), used this theory of Weick to elaborate a model of the process of engagement towards action. Figure 1 shows how the engagement process of African students in China towards the development of managerial practices via Chinese soft power.

For the analysis of soft power in a situational perspective, following the lead of Goffman and Girin, we will be concerned with what the African student in China develops and mobilizes with the resources at a his or her disposal thanks to his or her presence in

China. Their reflection progresses through the action and interpretation that refer to the concept of the construction of sense (sense-making). In this manner, the next part explores the theory of the construction of sense and the process of engagement for an action. Everyone has an interpretation of his or her environment or his or situation (every situation allows one to acquire the experience that is at the root of knowledge) which allows him or her to give sense to his or her actions. The construction of a common sense proper to an environment can guaranty the success of the action. This social dimension of the construction of sense was undertaken by other authors notably Weick in the perspective of sense making (Weick, 1988, 2012; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Weick is one of the early contributors to the conceptualizing of the interaction between actions and the creation of meaning which he refers to as sense-making.

Situation and Sensemaking box

Inputs

Chinese soft power

(1) Uncertainty about how soft power influences African students in China

(2) Shared knowledge between Chinese and African

(3) Action from African students in China

(4) Interaction between actors to construct representations

(5) African students' commitment to action

(6) Perceived change

Resilience

Outputs

Development of managerial practices (BN, CE, ED and KSD)

BN: Business network; CE: competitiveness of enterprises; ED: Entrepreneurship development and KSD: knowledge sharing development.

Figure 1 The engagement process of African students in China towards managerial

practices

The proposed framework was based on an integration of theories of sensemaking with the concepts of situation-management and developing theory of soft power. This combination provides a useful framework for measuring the perception of African students, in the situation of studying in China, through soft power. The results of the study offer a systematic model for further investigation into the impact of soft power and its managerial outcomes. This framework will also help to design and assess countries' interventions to enhance their cooperation. The results of the study, therefore, allow a new approach in developing a coherent model that associate soft power and managerial practices development in bilateral or multilateral relationships.

This research is, of course, not perfect. To start with, caution should be exercised in selecting and interpreting soft power variables since it is difficult to answer the question: Is there a sort of analogy between the way we relate to people and the way we relate to other entities like countries? Second, the quantitative measurement of the sources of soft power is a difficult task just as understanding the actual effect of soft power would always remain in the realm of subjective assessment, and the variables that we use in this study are not exhaustive. Third, the results of this research might not be easily generalized because Wuhan does not represent all of China. There are also some contextual variables (geographic, cultural, historical proximity and economic ties) affecting the deployment of soft power that could also improve the learning of managerial skills. We suggest for future research some longitudinal survey that could be done on African graduates of Chinese universities who working in Africa, in order to better determine the causal direction between Chinese soft power and the development of their managerial capabilities.

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Personal bibliography

Alexis Abodohoui holds a Bachelor (General Administration) degree from University of Abomey-Calavi (National School of Administration and Magistrate), a Master (Business Administration) and PhD (Organizational Behaviour) from Wuhan University of Technology (China). In 2011, he gained internship with UNESCAP (United Nations for Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific). In fall of 2012, he joined Laval University where he is completing another doctoral program in Strategy and International Business. He is researcher at the Chair Stephen A. Jarislowsly and lecturer at Faculty of management (Ulaval). He received several grants supports and has been involved into differents academic associations of his department. Currently, he is a Vice-President of Academic Affairs of AEDAUL (Association des Étudiantes et Étudiants au Doctorat en Administration de l'Université Laval). He is author and co-author of a number of papers in international business, knowledge management, entrepreneurship and cross-cultural management. Alexis Abodohoui is fluent in French, English, Chinese, Spanish, Thai and some African dialects. For his knowledge of Chinese and African business environment, culture and language (mandarin), Alexis Abodohoui is assisting African and Canadian companies to improve their business collaboration in Asia and Africa. Alexis Abodohoui, is PhD candidate and researcher at the Stephen A. Jarislowsky Chair in Management and International Business