Chapter 1
Fostering Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in Chinese Universities for a Creative Society

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ABSTRACT

Recently, building a creative society has been a new vision of China that brings much discussion on how to foster creative talents and how to improve pedagogic models in Chinese universities. This chapter regards problem-based learning (PBL) as a promising strategy, and accordingly, the following questions will be discussed: 1) How can we understand the context of building a creative society in China? 2) What is a PBL model? 3) How can we understand history of PBL in a global context? 4) What is the theoretical root of PBL? and 5) For Chinese universities, what are boundaries to be broken for facilitating changes towards PBL that benefits to build a creative society? As both challenges and opportunities of fostering PBL in Chinese universities will be revealed, and appropriate strategies of reform will be suggested, this chapter has important significances of pedagogical innovation in Chinese context. In addition, it also implies universities in other cultures for improving innovation strategies in the future.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, 'innovation-oriented nation' have been an officially recognized national strategy in China, and it has been a belief that only innovation will afford the nation a leading role in existing and emerging areas of development (Jing & Osborne, 2017). According to the report provided by Mckinsey Global Institute (MGI) in 2017 (https://www.mckinsey.com), China has one of the most active digital-investment and start-up ecosystems in the world, has the potential to set the world's digital frontier in coming decades. We can see that 'creativity', 'design', 'digitalization', 'entrepreneurship', and 'innovation' have become key words in Chinese political discourse. As one of key element of innovation, creativity has been a new strategic choice to combine with technology and market demand to develop high-value-added cultural and creative industries. Cultural creativity and technological innovation have been linked to the 'wheels of a cart and wings of a bird' for economic growth in China (Li, 2011). This underpins that creative industries promote the transformation of economic development model through transformation of resources, value upgrading, structural optimization, and market expansion.

Accordingly, to build a creative society has been one part of a new vision and development strategy in China. As The World Bank (2013) described, by 2030, if managed well, China could become a modern, harmonious, creative, and high-income society. Among a series of key factors of supporting the new strategy, 'creativity' and 'new technology' have been addressed as two key enablers to build a creative society. The new strategy highlights that China sees itself building its future prosperity on innovation in which everyone's creative potential is tapped. Its success will lie in its ability to produce more value, not more products, enabling it to move up the value chain and compete globally in the same product space as advanced countries. In the shift that China is moving towards a creative society, it is a more specific indicator of cultural progress that the slogan 'harmonious society', which is used to refer to all facets of people's lives (Zhou et al., 2017).

Given the role of young talents in technological development, attracting the creative, smart, and highly educated has been a major task for Chinese government in the past decade (The World Bank, 2013). What society really needs is a combination of creative skills and practical capabilities among Chinese students. As Li (2011) addressed, creative industries are an industrialized business operation system covering process of creative planning, production, marketing and consumption. Designers, engineers or technology developers, production crews, agents, marketing professionals, and managers should all be professionally trained. However, creative people cannot be fostered overnight. Creativity among Chinese students are influenced

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