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Editorial
Taking Stock and Looking Ahead: *MOR* and Chinese Management Research

This issue marks the publication of three volumes of *Management and Organization Review*. I would like to take this opportunity to thank many people whose support and involvement have turned an idea into reality, to reflect on how *MOR* was started, what we have accomplished thus far, and to look ahead on the role of *MOR* in advancing Chinese management and organization research and thereby contribute to global management knowledge. Let me start by inviting you to go back in time to January 1998, and travel along the memory lane until today, the end of 2007, exactly 10 years.

LOOKING BACK

On January 15, 1998, the Hong Kong University of Science Technology (HKUST) inaugurated a new research centre (the Hang Lung Center for Chinese Management Research or HLCOR) dedicated to advancing organization and management research in the Chinese context. The mission of the centre is 'to improve the practice of management in Chinese and multinational firms doing business in Greater China (e.g., mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan) and Chinese companies doing business globally, by conducting rigorous research and engaging in exchanges among network of business leaders and university scholars.' (http://www.bm.ust.hk/%7Ehlcor/). In that same year, the business school also succeeded in winning a major grant from the university to focus on developing Chinese business and management as a high impact research area for the university with HLCOR as the administrative arm of this effort. The university provided an additional grant to launch an academic journal dedicated to publishing Chinese management research. By the end of 1998, all the resources were in place to embark on the actual work. We set two priorities for the following five years: (i) to facilitate, support and publish Chinese management and organization research; and (ii) to introduce the mainstream research methods to junior faculty and

doctoral students in China. From 1999 to 2003, HLCOR organized four annual research methods workshops (one of which was in collaboration with the Chinese University of Hong Kong) with about 150 participants from mainland China and Taiwan. We funded a series of research projects and published these works in three edited books (Li et al., 2000; Tsui and Lau, 2002; Tsui et al., 2006) and guest edited a special issue in *Organization Science* (Tsui et al., 2004).

We set starting a journal as a lower priority in the first few years because we believed that it is more important to strengthen the research capabilities in China, including facilitating exchange and collaboration of research between Chinese and the overseas scholars. Beginning in 2001, we turned our attention to forming an association as a platform to facilitate international scholarly exchange and collaboration. On August 6, 2001, about 250 scholars and students from around the world gathered in Washington, DC (where the Academy of Management was holding its annual meeting) and voted to organize the International Association for Chinese Management Research (IACMR) with the primary goal of promoting 'scholarly studies of organization and management of firms in the Chinese context.' (http://www.iacmr.org). The inaugural conference of IACMR was held in Beijing, China on June 17–20, 2004, the second biannual conference in Nanjing in June 15–18, 2006, and the third conference will be held on June 19–22, 2008 in Guangzhou, China. To date, IACMR is a vibrant organization of more than 3,000 members from 67 countries.

In fall 2001, the deans of the business schools at Peking University and HKUST, Professors Weiying Zhang and Yuk-Shee Chan, respectively, joined hands and offered to sponsor the publication of *Management and Organization Review* (*MOR*). Efforts began to form the editorial team, an advisory board and a review board. In January 2003, IACMR signed an agreement with Blackwell to publish *MOR*. The inaugural issue (March 2005) was published in June 2004 to coincide with the inaugural conference of IACMR. High quality and interesting papers fill our nine issues in the three volumes and all issues were released on time, due to the developmental guidance and conscientious efforts of our nine senior editors, 27 advisors and 53 editorial review board members as well as over 100 ad hoc reviewers. These scholars as well as the authors, two sponsoring business schools and Blackwell (Wiley-Blackwell since summer 2007) deserve our wholehearted gratitude. Without their valuable advice, time, guidance and often selfless contribution, *MOR* would not have become a reality. Thank you!

CURRENT STATUS

The mission of *MOR* is to publish innovative research contributing to management knowledge in three domains: (i) fundamental research in management; (ii) international, cross-cultural and comparative management; and (iii) Chinese management, including research on the management and organization of Chinese

companies and multinational companies operating in China. In the three volumes, we published a total of 45 articles, exclusive of editorial essays and an introduction to the special issue on 'Developing Valid Measures for Chinese Management Research'. These 45 articles relate to the three domains of *MOR* with 16 articles on China specific topics, eight cross-cultural studies, comparing China and another culture, six international management studies, seven general management papers, seven scale development or research methods articles. These 45 articles have a global authorship, with 60 percent of the first authors from the USA, followed by Greater China – mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore (24 percent), and the rest of the world specifically Canada, Finland, Germany, Mexico, and the UK (16 percent).

MOR readership reaches 28 countries. We distributed between 1,500 to 2,500 copies each issue. A majority of the readers are in China (45 percent), followed by the USA (30 percent), then HK/Macau/Taiwan (10 percent) and the rest of the world (15 percent). Readership extends beyond hard copies. Blackwell *Synergy* provides free downloads of *MOR* articles. In 2006, there were a total of 11,857 downloads. In 2006, downloads increased to 30,321. Beginning in 2007, free download is available only to IACMR members but the first issue is available to all readers (except volume 2, with the third issue on 'Developing valid measures for Chinese management research' instead of the first issue free for all to download). Even with limiting free download to only one issue, in the first six months of 2007, downloads of *MOR* articles reached 14,482, about the same rate as 2006. Libraries and readers in mainland China are the most frequent users of the journal online, followed by Taiwan and Australia. In addition, there are almost 1,000 readers signed up with Blackwell for email table of contents alerts. As of July 2007, there are 38 library subscriptions to hard copies of *MOR* along with over 900+ subscriptions with online access. In brief, *MOR* readership is large and widely distributed around the world.

MOR articles are being cited in most of the top journals in our field, such as the *Academy of Management Journal, Administrative Science Quarterly, Strategic Management Journal, Journal of International Business Studies, Journal of Management, Organization Science, Management Science, Organizational Studies, Journal of Organizational Behavior, Journal of Business Ethics, Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* and *China Review,* among others. Citations are a commonly accepted indication of the impact of a journal. *MOR* has done well on this measure in its short life, especially given the fact that most of the citations are to the articles in the first volume only.

Potential authors are always interested in the acceptance rates of journals. At *MOR*, for all new submissions, about 35 percent were returned without review (usually accompanied by a developmental letter from the editor) and 35 percent received a revise and resubmit decision. The overall acceptance rate based on new submissions is 17 percent and about 50 percent based on revised manuscripts. The editorial decision takes an average of 80 days, below our goal of a 90-day turn

around time. These indicators are also comparable with many leading journals the acceptance rate of them ranges from 10 percent to 20 percent and editorial turn around time range from two to four months.

In summary, *MOR* has come a long way in its first three volumes. It has a global authorship, an equally wide global readership and articles in leading journals are citing its articles. It is well positioned to become, and by some measures it is already, the authoritative source for knowledge on Chinese management and organizations.

LOOKING AHEAD

While we are gratified with the accomplishments to date, there is much more we need to do to advance our goal of *MOR* becoming a journal that publishes innovative, insightful and high quality research about Chinese management and organizations and contributing to knowledge about new and emerging contexts like China. As pointed out by many observers of international management research (e.g., Leung, 2007; Meyer, 2006; Tung, 2006), most of the papers published in mainstream leading journals, including those in *MOR*, rely on the 'outside-in' approach that I discussed in the 'Contextualization' editorial essay published in issue 1 of volume 2 (Tsui, 2006). In other words, authors use existing theories and constructs to examine phenomena or research issues prevalent in Western literature and familiar to mainstream scholars. Adopting, modeling, or imitating the dominant North American research paradigm among international newcomers is understandable. It is an effective way to learn the ropes of conducting research and a relatively low-risk approach to research success. However, this 'stampede for top-tier publication' (Leung, 2007, p. 510) by studying familiar topics using existing theories and constructs also suggests less attention to discovering or exploring important questions in novel contexts, less in-depth understanding, and fewer opportunities to develop innovative theories on novel or unique phenomena. This is particularly important in contexts like China where economic growth seems to have outpaced the development of management capabilities.[1] Below, I discuss two challenges to significant progress in Chinese management research and I offer some suggestions to meet these challenges and discuss the role of *MOR* in each.

Engage the Contribution of Local Chinese Scholars

Currently, a majority of *MOR* authors are not from the Chinese context. Of the 45 first authors in the three volumes of *MOR*, only ten are from the Greater China region, less than 25 percent. Four are from mainland China (Lu et al., 2006; Luo, 2005; Xiao and Bjorkman, 2006; Zhang et al., 2006), three from Hong Kong (Choi and Chen, 2006; Huang et al., 2005; Tjosvold et al., 2006), one from Taiwan (Tan et al., 2007), and two from Singapore (Ang et al., 2007; Ng and Chua, 2006).

Of the four authors from mainland China, three obtained their research training from outside the mainland. My observation is that the home-grown local Chinese scholars have great ideas and great insight about local management phenomena. They also can learn and have learned the normal science research method (which dominates the North America research paradigm) fast. However, language remains a major barrier to their ability to share their research ideas and results with the international academic community. Some Chinese scholars have found research partners through their overseas visits, which are becoming easier and more frequent with the Chinese government devoting increased funding to support overseas studies. Unfortunately, in most of these collaborations, the Chinese scholars usually play the junior role and follow the lead of the non-Chinese scholars. I believe the modesty of Chinese scholars has compromised their potential contribution to the partnership. I encourage Chinese scholars to be more bold and confident by forwarding their ideas in the research discussions and leading the international partners to study important issues in China. The Chinese scholars should bring in relevant Chinese literature and utilize their deep knowledge of the local context in the process of theorizing about the phenomena. International scholars, even those who might be born and raised in China, may not be able to engage in this work as easily and naturally as local scholars. International scholars could use their outsider perspective to raise questions about assumptions that may not be obvious to insiders.

Beyond overseas study trips, another forum to foster such partnerships is participation in the biannual conference of the IACMR, which has had strong participation from international scholars. Submitting papers to the IACMR conference serves the dual purposes of receiving some feedback on the manuscript and having the opportunity to attract potential international collaborators who share similar interests and are equally eager for partnership with local scholars. Such partnerships are likely to lead to better research than that by either international scholars or local scholars pursuing the work alone. The benefits of such collaboration are well documented (Peterson, 2001; Tsui, 2007). Another function that conferences can serve is to provide the occasion for talk, drink and laughter. As March states, 'The irrelevant facilitators of association provide bases for warm social interaction and thus, ultimately for scholarly exchange and collaboration' and suggests 'appropriate attention to the role of wine, flirtation and play' (March, 2005, p. 17) to precede the serious exchange of ideas and meeting of minds.

I urge Chinese scholars to write the first drafts putting forward the ideas without worrying about grammar and style in the initial drafts.[2] Discussions and iterative revisions will eventually result in a paper that can contribute unique and innovative insight about meaningful Chinese management phenomena. They can focus on improving the English in the final stage, and if circumstances allow, engage the help of a proficient English editor to polish the writing. If a Chinese scholar has a manuscript that contains an interesting idea or promising data, *MOR* would be

happy to play the role of match making by recommending a potential international collaborator to the Chinese scholar/author. *MOR* would like to serve as a bridge to connect Chinese local scholars with the international research community. *MOR* sees its mission as being to advance global management knowledge through nurturing and publishing the work of local Chinese scholars and scholarship.

Encourage Indigenous Studies with Thick Descriptions

MOR encourages 'inside- out' studies on China. This might begin with contextualized questioning and thick descriptions of novel phenomena, followed by theory building to explain the interesting patterns. Thick descriptions of a local phenomenon that yield insight that departs from common knowledge or common (Western) wisdom would be particularly welcomed at *MOR*. The journal would like to publish inductive research using case study, interview, or ethnographic methods. While these papers may not have a complete theory, they should show part of the theorizing process consisting of activities like 'abstracting, generalizing, relating, selecting, explaining, synthesizing, and idealizing' (Weick, 1995, p. 389). An 'approximate theory' is a good step toward a complete and systematic theory. A good example of such thick description studies without a fully developed theory, yet informative of an interesting phenomenon that departs from common knowledge, is the paper by Meyer and Liu (2006). They coined the term 'indefinite boundaries' to describe the incomplete separation of firms from the state, incomplete integration of firms and partial listing of assets as both consequences of reform and strategic responses to find and exploit market opportunities by firms. The authors provide a rich description of a company to illustrate the nature and dynamic of indefinite boundaries, adding new theoretical insight to the extant literature on organizational theory and governance.

In a forthcoming article in the 50th anniversary issue of the *Academy of Management Journal*, Hambrick (2007) urges, 'leading journals in management should broaden their scope to include papers that do not directly contribute to theory but that are nonetheless of great potential consequence. These might be papers that identify compelling empirical patterns that cry out for future research and theorizing. They might be rich qualitative descriptions of important but unexplored phenomena that, once described, could stimulate the development of theory and other insights.' *MOR* is prepared to heed Hambrick's advice and welcome manuscripts that offer thick descriptions of novel phenomena in China.

Whetten (2002) emphasizes the importance of international studies joining the extant literature by the dual process of making issues in novel contexts familiar to international scholars and bringing out the contextual novelty in familiar issues. In a forthcoming article in *MOR*, Whetten (2008) provides additional detailed guidance on constructing both 'contextualized theory' (theories *in* context or contextualizing extant theories) and 'context-effects theory' (theories *of* context or using

context to formulate new theories). Further discussion of deep contextualization to advance new knowledge about novel contexts also can be found in Tsui (2007).

Advancing Chinese management research is not only for China, but is of great interest and value to the global research and business communities alike. *MOR* aims to fill the gap in the global management knowledge by promoting and advancing management research IN and ON China. We have published three volumes with interesting papers that have a wide readership and leading journals in the field are citing *MOR* papers. Modesty aside, I believe *Management and Organization Review* has arrived and is well-positioned to contribute to the much needed knowledge about management and organizations in the Chinese context and beyond.

NOTES

[1] For example, the quality problems in Chinese manufacturing are due to poor management, both of MNCs and Chinese contractors. See, for example, Scandal and Suicide in China: A Dark Side of Toys, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/23/business/worldbusiness/23suicide.html.
[2] Of course, the version to the journal should be free of grammatical errors and be as polished as is possible. Having peer review to identify gaps in logic, literature, or methods is a desired step. Engaging the work of a native English editor is highly recommended before submitting the paper to a journal.

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